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Short VIEW OF THE EVIDENCES

Upon which the
Christian Religion,
And the Divine Authority of the
HOLY SCRIPTURES
IS ESTABLISHED.

In TWO PARTS.

PART I.

Of the Moral Evidence establishing the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

With a DEFENCE

Not only of the *Usefulness*, but also of the *Necessity* of Divine Revelation; against the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*.

Arduum est contra stimulos calcitrare.

Atticus Ciceroni. & Act. ix. 5.

Auct. P. M. Eccl. Scot. Direptæ & Gementis, Presb.

L O N D O N :

For G. Strabam, over-against the Royal-Exchange, Cornhill ;
W. Innis, and R. Manby, at the West End of St. Paul's
Church-Yard ; Alexander Lyon, near Tom's Coffee-House,
in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden ; and others.

1734

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WILKES
EVIDENCES

Christian Religion

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TO THE MOST
Learned and Illustrious
THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CAMBRIDGE,
THIS
First PART

Is humbly Submitted,

and Dedicated, by

Pa. Middleton;



Advertisement.

THIS TREATISE was finished, some time before the Death of the late Dr. Tindal, in August last : And the Labour of transcribing the Passages, which suppose him to be alive, was not judged necessary. Tho' he is dead, yet he speaketh by his Book, unto too many, with a dangerous Influence.

A short and easy further Labour might suffice to answer all the Reasoning of his Book, that is not examined in this TREATISE. But the Design of this Performance, was only to subvert, the chief and boasted Arguments of that Author ; tho' some more of his poisoning Errors, are briefly touched.

It is to be wished, that some accurate and pious Hand of Leisure, and Opportunity, may explain, and set in a due Light, the great Number of Texts of the HOLY SCRIPTURE, which that Author hath endeavoured to pervert ; for rescuing weak Minds, from the Danger of being imposed upon, by his Burlesque ; and absurd Glosses ; in such Manner, as a learned GENTLEMAN of Cambridge, hath laudably rescued, from his blundering Abuses, those Passages of the anti-ent Fathers, which he hath sordidly Lampooned. And this is the more to be wished : Because he seems to have collected all the Texts that have formerly been the Subject of the Buffoonry of Infidels, which he hath artfully dispersed throughout his Book : And because those of his Kidney have usually such Texts in readiness, for Amusement and Stumbling-blocks to Christians, in their common Conversation.

This Advertisement, is to save the Labour of any formal PREFACE.

THE CONTENTS OF PART I.



INTRODUCTION Page 1
The artful Industry to propagate Infidelity.

The great Importance of Religion; and the Concern Men have in it.

The Benefit of some Abridgment of the chief Grounds for believing the Truth of Christianity, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

CHAP. I.

AN Abridgment of the Moral Evidence, establishing those Truths.

Two Inferences therefrom.

CHAP. II.

REMARKS upon the Grand Argument of Christianity as old as the Creation, as it is only generally considered.

That the Ideas it offers, and the Terms it carries, can never be united to form his Conclusion, tho' all his false Premises were allowed; and the false Mediums that are necessary for uniting them.

The chief Motive of that Author, to attack Christianity, appeareth to have been, a Spight conceived against the Clergy and Priesthood. And the Influence this should have upon the Clergy.

The Absurdity of the Principle, that a Being of Infinite Wisdom cannot, at all, act Unnecessarily.

The subtil and dangerous Insinuations of this Author. An Example of it, in his Page 388. where the Philosophers are introduced, as not to be drawn into the Belief, that a Devil (in the Serpent) seduced Eve.

CHAP. III.

A More particular Examination of that Authors Grand Argument in which the Usefulness of revealed Religion is vindicated

A par-

The CONTENTS.

A particular View of the Light of common Reason, which he affirms to be a perfect Rule of moral Duty. 59

What we allow to be truly due to the Light of common Reason. § 3. 66

Yet in the present State of Mankind, Reason it self doth plead the need of more Light, and more Help, to enable Men, duly to know and discharge their moral Duty. § 4. 68

An Answer to the Argument drawn from the high Attainments of some who had no other Guide than the Light of common Reason. 69

That the present weak and corrupted State of the humane Mind, is no less evident, than the Light of common Reason itself. And the Usefulness of Revelation inferred therefrom. 69

That there is nothing relating to moral Duty, that is not plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures. An Answer to the Earl of Shaftsbury's Exceptions against this, with regard to Friendship, and the Love of ones Country. This Answer by way of Annotation. 82

Remarks upon the two false Principles that are needed for connecting our Authors Grand Argument; viz. First, That every Help is Useless and Superfluous, that is not absolutely necessary. And Secondly, That if Revelation is not necessary for Men; God could not (in Point of Wisdom) have given it. 95

C H A P. IV.

OF the Necessity of Divine Revelation, Because the Light of common Reason is not a perfectly sufficient Rule of moral Duty. 100

The Existence of a Deity, a Truth which every Man is not capable to discover by the mere Light of common Reason. 103

A Compendious moral Proof, as once, both of the Divine Revelation, and the Existence of a Deity. 107

That the moral Evidence (which includeth universal Tradition) is all that the Illiterate Multitude can have, even for the Conviction of a Deity, by the use of their uncultivated Reason. With an Answer to the Objection, from Rom. 1. 19, 20, 21, &c. 109

Of the Instruction they may receive from the Learned. And that this doth not supersede the need of Revelation. 114

The Divine Providence, another of those Truths, whereof every Man is not capable to attain the Knowledge and Conviction, by the mere Light of common Reason. 117

Remarks upon Mr. Woollaston's Proof of this Divine Providence: Especially with regard to a particular Providence. And the Defects of his Proof detected, in several Instances. 120; &c.

Of

The CONTENTS.

Of Mr. Woollaston's Proof of the Divine Prescience. With Remarks upon it. 140

That there are Mysteries in Philosophy, as well as Revelation. 154

Mr. Woollaston's Proof of the special Providence, drawn from this: That God is a Being of perfect Reason; and therefore Man must be treated, as what he is. With Remarks upon it. § 10. 157

C H A P. V.

THE Immortality of the Soul; and the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; are Truths of which every Man is not capable of himself, to attain the Knowledge and Conviction, by the mere Light of common Reason. 163

That the Evidence of these Truths, which the best Philosophers had, did not render them free of Doubtfulness. 164

The Summary of the Evidence they had. 170

How far these Truths do admit of Scientific Proof? 173

Of the Cartesian Argument for the Immortality of the Soul. 179

A more solid Proof of this. 182

The Manner of Worship that will surely be acceptable to God cannot be discovered by the mere Light of common Reason. 185

The Certainty that God will forgive, and be reconciled to Sinners; not to be attained by the mere Light of common Reason. 190

The Reasoning of Mr. Nye, and Mr. Lock, upon this Subject, examined. 193

The Assurance of the Divine Aid, in our wrestling State of Infirmary; not to be attained by the mere Light of common Reason. 212

A Confectary from the whole that hath been treated. 218

C H A P. VI.

Of the great Objection against the Necessity of the Christian Revelation; viz. The want of an universal Manifestation. 219

The Doctrine of the New Testament, with regard to the Necessity of the Christian Revelation. 223

Of the 18th Article of the Church of England. 233

Of the Consistency of these two Truths: The Necessity of the Christian Revelation, tho' it is not universally manifested; And the universal Benevolence of God. 234

The Way the Calvinists take to solve this Difficulty. 236

The different Situation and Circumstances of fall'n Man, and the apostate Angels. 237

Two

The CONTENTS.

Two other Ways mentioned, that are taken to solve this Difficulty.	240
The third and best Way of solving it.	241
That in this third Way, all the Queries of the Author of Christianity as old as the Creation, are easily answered.	245, &c.
Passages of the New Testament that recommend this way of reconciling the Truths under view.	249
An Objection answered.	251

Contents of the APPENDIX.

C H A P. I.

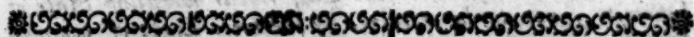
T H E Difficulty arising from the State of the Pagan World more fully removed.	1, &c.
--	--------

C H A P. II.

A Short View of the Divine Care, to manifest the Knowledge of Himself, and of his Will, by Revelation; throughout the several Ages of the World.	13
--	----

C H A P. III.

T H E Difficulty arising from the State of the Americans, more especially considered.	33
Of the universal Tradition, and the three Truths thereby preserved, in the whole Race of Mankind.	38
Viz. The Existence of a Deity; who is to be worshipped; A Providence; and the Hope, and Fear, of future Reward, and Punishment.	



ERRATA that may mar the Sense; and therefore, to be corrected with the Pen, before beginning to read the Treatise.

PAGE 15. l. 7. for following, read foregoing. p. 23. l. 2. read Laborious. p. 77. l. 5. dele third. p. 93. l. 30. for yet, read yea p. 117. l. 3. read Corruptible. p. 121. l. 9. read Gigantick. p. 137. l. ult. read in itself. p. 142. for Presence, read Prescience. p. 148. l. 20. read seems. p. 149. l. 22. read doth not solve. p. 154. l. 25. for Works, read Words, p. 181. l. 5. for desolves, read Dissolves. p. 189. l. 29. dele viz p. 249. l. 26. read *тѣтъмъвои*. Appendix. p. 38. l. 33. read Race.

P A R T I.



PART I.
OF THE
Moral Evidence
ESTABLISHING THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
AND THE
Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture.
WITH A
DEFENCE
Both of the Usefulness and Necessity of
DIVINE REVELATION.

The **INTRODUCTION.**

§ 1.  **INFIDELITY** spreads in this Island with a Career that is deplorable; and altho' Enthusiasm may well seem to be of all things the most opposite to it; yet the wild Extravagances and De-
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lusions thereof, that have abounded with us of *Great-Britain*, since the Inundation of them did arise in the Troubles of *K. Charles I.* have given a woful handle to Men of loose Principles; who set up for Wit upon no other Foundation, than the decrying of all Divine Inspiration, and the turning of revealed Religion into Jest, which hath now become so common, and withal so extravagant, against all the Rules of Humanity as well as Decency, that sober and religious Men, are not only strongly tempted, but driven to think, they are prompted by infernal Inspiration, whetting and emboldening their corrupted Minds with bitter Sarcasm, and sharpening their profane Tongues with a facetious Scurrility, as if they were set on Fire of Hell. (*Ja. 3. 6.*)

To give check to this growing Tide of Infidelity, many excellent Books have been written. And the Moral Arguments for the Truth of our Holy Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are drawn from Facts; have been copiously illustrated, and so convincingly pressed home; that it may seem needless to publish more upon that Subject. For there is scarcely any thing to be suggested as new. The ancient Apologists, and learned Men of later times, have treated so fully of it.

But the unbridled Tongues, and envenomed Pens of the Enemies of revealed Religion, are incessantly at work; not indeed

to examine the solid and weighty Evidence of Facts, as they are joined in one united Force; as all Moral Proof ought to be considered. No: They are too cunning to make trial of that. But by a restless Endeavour to pervert Mankind, they are still nibbling at some single Fact, separately considered; or carping at some Inference therefrom, which perhaps some have rashly made; to try how they can raise Doubts and Difficulties. And if they can but insinuate a Suspicion of any one thing, however small it be; they are ready with their sly Innuendoe's, that all the other Topics of Moral Proof, and the Inferences from them, are equally precarious and uncertain. Requiring nothing less than Proofs of Demonstration from Principles of Self Evidence; as if no Moral Evidence could afford a true Conviction to an unbiassed Mind.

And wherever they can fall in, with the Youth of pregnant Spirit and more liberal Education; they bend all their Arts, to corrupt their Minds; which are often too easy in receiving ill Impressions: Especially when the Baits are dressed with wanton Jollity and good Humour, and the plausible pretext of Free-thinking.

Now because they who are in greatest Danger of being insnared, have their Minds either chiefly bent on rendring themselves fitted for some way of pushing their Fortune, or are usually pursuing other Studies

for their own Improvement ; and are but rarely addicted enough to the great Concerns of Religion ; or taken up with the important Consideration of a future Life : It may therefore be a charitable Office to use kind Endeavours for awakening in their Minds, a due Sense of the vast Importance of Religion, and the unexpressible Interest and Concernment they have in it.

§ 2. And do they not daily hear from the Holy Scriptures, and the Doctrine of Christianity, of an Eternity, either of Happiness and solacing Joys, or of Misery and Torments ; which is to begin, when this frail Life doth end ? Now can these Men of Jollity, give them any demonstrative Evidence, that in the Event, they shall not really find it so ? Can they prove from their Principles of Self Evidence, that these are only amusing Whims, and Melancholy Dreams, or Scare-crows and Bug-bears, to frighten them from their sinful Pleasures, and disturb their carnal Repose ? No ; tho' they are daring enough, yet they have not the Confidence to pretend to this.

And ought not this to awaken that Reason wherewith Men are endowed, at least to ponder deliberately the weighty Arguments of Moral Evidence, for the Truth of Christianity, with all the impartiality they can ? If there is an Hereafter, in which all must be Sharers eternally ; either of the greatest Felicity, or the most dreadful Misery ?

Part I. *The Introduction.*

fery? If this is confidently affirmed, on the one hand, by wise and good Men, who profess a full Conviction of it: And on the other hand, there is no pretended Evidence, that it is not, or cannot be so: Is not the very possibility of this, enough to awaken their enquiry? Surely, this one Consideration, if entertained with common Prudence, and the least Degree of due Concern for Self-preservation, must do it effectually; unless those jolly Wits have fool'd them out of all their Senses. Can Men, reasonable Men, forbear to think, what shall become of themselves hereafter, if there may be an Hereafter State, and to all Eternity?

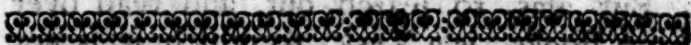
But alas, to search out, and read over large Books, is a Task, to which it is not easy to draw the Incogitancy of Youth; especially to do it with the Application which this important Matter doth require. And the Devil and his Instruments are ready to obtrude Amusements to divert from it. And therefore it may be useful, and profitable, to have some short Compendium or Abridgment of the chief Grounds for believing the Truths of our Holy Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which may be often under view; that the Force of it, may be examined, and deliberately weighed. That in this narrow Field, they may Think, and Think often, with all the Freedom, that becomes a candid and well disposed Mind, desirous to find the

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Truth,

Truth, and willing to embrace it, when it is found.

Now there is a beautiful Specimen of such Summary, drawn by a Friend of the Author of *Fides & Ratio collata*, printed by Mr. Wetsten Amstelod. 1708. wherein much of the weighty Moral Proofs, is reduced into a Mathematical Form; which by the Divine Blessing may be of excellent use to the ingenious Youth, as an Antidote against the Infection, of what is now falsely called Free-thinking; being a superficial Thinking with the grossest Prejudice, and the most perverse Obstinacy. And this, with some small Alteration, is as followeth.



CHAP. I.

An Abridgment of the Moral Evidence upon which the Christian Religion and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture is established.

Historical Suppositions.

§ I. **FIRST**, That there was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, who had Disciples, and taught them a way of Divine Worship, new, and different from what was then usual in Judea; and confirmed it by Miracles: That he was hated and persecuted

secuted and put to death. The Jews themselves, the bitter Enemies, of his Name and Memory, always did, and still do own and confess all this.

2dly, That not only his own Apostles and Disciples, but their Followers in great Number, did cheerfully undergo Torments and Death, for testifying his Resurrection, and the Things that he had taught and done.

3dly, That the New Testament doth chiefly contain, the Christian Religion, or that new Way of Worship, as the Old Testament doth the Jewish, viz. as it requires Faith in Jesus, as our Saviour, a more perfect Holiness of Heart and Life, than any other doth require; a more perfect Humility, Patience, Chastity, and Love of God and our Neighbour, with Forgiveness, Love of Enemies, and Contempt of worldly Pleasures and Profits.

4thly, That the Books of the Four Gospels, at least three of them unquestionably, were written by those who lived with Jesus, and had familiarity with him. St. John, particularly affirms this of himself, in the beginning and end of his Gospel; and in the beginning of his First Epistle.

5thly, That the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth had the Gift of Tongues, and did confirm their Commission and Doctrine by Miracles.

6thly. That the said Apostles and Disciples did commit to writing in the Books and Epistles of the New Testament, the Doctrine

which they taught, as the Religion and Worship instituted by the said Jesus. The Evidence of this is greater than for the Writings of Plato, Julius Cæsar, Cicero, or Seneca.

7thly. That the Books of the New Testament do confirm the Old Testament, not only by taking from them, Arguments for the Truth of the Christian Religion; but also by their express Testimony, that they are authentick divine Revelation, Our Saviour himself, often did so; and among others, so doth St. Peter, in his 2d Epistle, Chap. 1. ver. ult. and the Author to the Hebr. Chap. 1, ver. 1.

A X I O M S.

Axiom 1. No Man of a sound and sober Mind will assert the truth of a thing, which he knows to be false; when the asserting of it, and adhering to it, brings him no Profit, but evidently will draw upon him, the rage and hatred of the World; yea when he hath the Experience of this Effect of it, to his own Conviction.

Axiom 2. Much less will a Multitude of such Men, at different times, and far distant Places, concur to testify any Fact which they know to be false, as the Eye Witnesses of it; and to suffer all kind of Torments, and Death, with Constancy and Cheerfulness, rather than deny it.

Axiom 3. It is incredible, and cannot be imagined without horrid Indignity to GOD; that

that he should not only suffer an Impostor to to foretell expressly, that he was to undergo a shameful and cruel Death; and arise again the third Day; but likewise that this Impostor should actually arise again from Death, at the time he had prefixed.

Axiom 4. Yea it is a hideous Reflection upon the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of GOD, to think that he would, by a Miracle, restore unto life, a Man of a false Religion, persuading others to embrace it; even tho' he were himself ignorant that his Religion is false. Especially when such innumerable Multitudes were thereby to be drawn over into that false Religion, after the Man himself had suffered an ignominious Death.

Axiom 5. None but God omnipotent, can raise from the dead unto life, either himself, immediately; or by his Ministers and holy Men.

Axiom 6. There cannot be a greater Imposture, than that by which it is endeavoured to obtrude the false Worship of GOD, for his true Worship.

Axiom 7. The Gift of Tongues, and Miracles, are sufficient Evidences of the Divine Commission and Authority, when the Doctrine and Precepts which they are brought to confirm, are no wise contradictory to the manifest Principles of human Reason; more especially when they plainly tend, to the advancing of Moral Duty, and the Perfection and Felicity of Mankind.

Axiom 8.

Axiom 8. Two Contradictories can neither be both of them true, nor both of them false, at the same time.

The Propositions to be demonstrated.

First Proposition.

Jesus of Nazareth did truly arise again from the Dead.

The Demonstration.

§ 2. According to the first Supposition; it is the universal Consent of his Enemies, that there was such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth*; that he did teach and institute a new Religion and Worship, very different from the *Jewish*, in that Age; that thereby he incurred the hatred of the *Jews*, was persecuted by them, and in the end crucified; according to the second and fourth Suppositions: And altho' his Enemies dissembled, endeavouring to lessen, and even to deny his laudable and wonderful Works; especially his Resurrection from Death; yet his Disciples and Followers, in great Number, who were the Eye Witnesses, did testify the verity of them; with such Constancy, that no Torments, or the most cruel Death, could induce them to denial, or even to forbear the publishing those Truths. By the first and second Axiom, none of a sober and sound

sound Mind, would so assert any Falsehood, as the Eye Witnesses of it, and so adhere to their Testimony, being an unprofitable Falsehood; much less would a Multitude of such, do so, at different times, and far distant Places; to the drawing evidently upon themselves, Disgraces, Torments, and cruel Death; and at the same time be all of them conscious of this Falsehood. Therefore, *Jesus of Nazareth* did truly arise from the Dead. Q. E. D. i. e. *which was to be demonstrated.*

Confessary, Seing none but GOD can raise from the dead, by the fifth Axiom: Therefore the Disciples of *Jesus of Nazareth* have testified truly when they affirm that GOD did raise him from the dead.

Second Proposition.

The Christian Religion is the true Religion.

The Demonstration.

That Way of Worship which is called the Christian Religion, was instituted by *Jesus of Nazareth*, as his very Enemies do witness, according to the first Supposition: If this is not the true Worship or Religion, it must be necessary; that either *Jesus of Nazareth*, knowing this, did designedly obtrude a false Worship for the true; and thereby was a most vile Impostor, by the sixth Axiom. Or else that being first himself deceived, he did therefore deceive innumera-
ble

ble others. But seeing God did raise him from the dead by the Consecratory of the first Proposition; both of them must be absurd. The first of them, by the third Axiom. The last of them by the fourth Axiom. Therefore this Proposition, that the Worship instituted by *Jesus of Nazareth* is not the true Worship; seeing these Absurdities do necessarily follow from it, must it self be also absurd. Therefore the Contradictory of this Absurdity, is necessarily true, by the eighth Axiom; viz. That the Christian Religion or Worship, is the true Religion. Q. E. D. Consecratory. Therefore the Apostles and Disciples of this *Jesus*, had the true Religion, which they testified and chiefly taught to others; according to the second, third, and fourth Suppositions; it being evident from the first and second Axioms, that they witnessed truly.

Third Proposition.

The Writings of the New Testament, are of Divine Revelation, or the Word of G. O. D.

The Demonstration.

The Writings of the *New Testament* are those Books and Epistles which the Apostles and Disciples, who had the Gift of Tongues, and did confirm their Commission and Doctrine by Miracles, have committed to writing as the Religion and Worship instituted

tuted by *Jesus of Nazareth*, according to the fifth and sixth Suppositions; and consequently by the seventh Axiom, there is sufficient Evidence of their Divine Commission and Authority: If the Doctrines and Precepts contained in them, are no wise contradictory to the manifest Principles of human Reason; and more especially, if they plainly tend to the advancing of Moral Duty and the Perfection and Felicity of Mankind. But the Doctrines and Precepts contained in the Writings of the *New Testament*, are no wise contradictory to the manifest Principles of human Reason; and do plainly tend to the advancing of Moral Duty, and the Perfection and Felicity of Mankind. Therefore the Writings of the *New Testament* are of Divine Authority, or the Revelation and Word of GOD. Q. E. D.

Fourth Proposition.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament are equally the Word of GOD, or of Divine Revelation.

The Demonstration

Not only the Citations from the Books of the *Old Testament* by *Jesus Christ* himself, and the Writers of the *New Testament*; but also their express Assertions, do testify that those are the Word of GOD, according to the seventh Supposition. But the Writings
of

of the *New Testament* are of Divine Authority, and the Word of GOD, by the third Proposition. Therefore there is likewise no doubt concerning the Divine Authority of the *Old Testament*. Q. E. D.

A short SUPPLEMENT.

§ 3. The continued Series of Prophets in the *Jewish Nation*, from *Moses* to *Ezra*, with the solemn Evidences by which their Authority was vouched (especially of *Moses*, *Joshua*, *Elijah*, *Elisha*, *Daniel*) did establish the Divine Authority of the *Old Testament*, altho' it had not received the Evidence which it derives from the *New Testament*, by the fourth Proposition: And then from the *Old Testament*, the Apostles did prove that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, or promised *Messiah*; as he in whom the Types and Prophecies were fulfilled. In *St. Luke* 24. ver. 25, 26, 27, Our *Saviour* himself did after his Resurrection use this Proof, in his Conference with the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*.

It is certain from the most authentic Documents of those primitive Times, that during near to the End of the third Century, of Christianity, not only Miracles and Divine Inspiration did all along continue in the Christian Churches of *Asia*, *Europe*, and *Africa*; but also the Gift of discerning Spirits. It is also certain from the same extant Monuments, that the *New Testament*,

as well as the *Old Testament*, were then received by Christians as the Word of GOD; and that the Truths of Christianity were vindicated, from the Authority thereof, against false Teachers and Hereticks. And the Evidence of those Facts, doth plainly concur with the Topics in the following Chain of Moral Proof, to give pregnant Testimony to the Canon of the Holy Scriptures that was then, and hath ever since, been universally received and owned as the Word of GOD, by Christians.

There are also many other collateral external Arguments, that are likewise drawn from Facts unquestionable, which do concur as Topics of Moral Proof, to establish the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures: Such as, the completion of Prophecies, the miraculous sudden Propagation of Christianity, mostly by the Ministry of weak illiterate Men, in opposition to all the Powers on Earth, and all the Learning, as well as Prejudices of the then World; and the rendring dumb and silent all the most celebrated Heathen Oracles, as is attested by unexceptionable Vouchers; and the Attestation given even by Pagan Authors to variety of those Facts which concur to establish the Truth of Christianity; and sundry other ancient Facts, which for the sake of brevity I here omit.

(See Chap. 3. § 3.)

§ 4. Finally, If all the Circumstances of the Jewish Nation in their long continued exile State,

State, are duly weighed, it affords no small Evidence of the Truth of Christianity. In their Dispersion which hath lasted near 1700 Years, they have continued a People unmixed, and separate from the rest of Mankind; Strangers in every Nation (Infidel or Christian) wherein they sojourn throughout the World; without any Property of Land, or settled Habitation. Whereas all other Nations, in their respective Dispersions, have still been incorporated with the People and Nations among whom they have lived; without any the like Example. For

First. In all this time of their Dispersion, tho' at the remotest Distances, they have still tenaciously adhered to the Revelation of the *Old Testament*, in which all the Prophecies and Types, fulfilled by *Jesus Christ* the promised *Messiah*, are recorded; concurring by this with Christians, to preserve the Evidence thereby afforded to Christianity, tho' they hate and blaspheme it; and at the same time owning, that our *Saviour* did institute, and that his Disciples did propagate the Gospel.

Secondly. Their obstinate Rejection, and cruel hatred of our *Saviour* was such, that they not only persecuted him, falsely accused and despihtfully used him; but their Answer to *Pilate* expressing his Fear of incurring the Guilt of Innocent Blood, was this, *His Blood be upon us, and our Children.* Which plainly is most signally entailed as a
Curse

Curse on their Posterity, so long Strangers and dispersed throughout the habitable World; and subjected to the Dominion and Contempt of all People and Nations, wherever they are suffered to retain and sojourn.

Thirdly. Their still continued separate and unmixt State (a thing so extraordinary and unprecedented, not followed by any Parallel) gives great Ground to look for some extraordinary turn of Divine Providence, relating to them; and to expect the happy Time of their Conversion (according to the exprefs Prediction of *St. Paul, Rom. 11.*) As soon as the great Ends of Providence that must precede, are fulfilled. And indeed the spreading Infidelity of this Age, gives just Cause to all that are sincerely Pious, to join with the universal Church, in fervent Prayer, for the Accomplishment of this. That an Occurrence so stupendious, may give such new and signal Evidence, as will terrify, and stop the Mouths of Infidels; and joyfully confirm the Faith of weak and wavering Christians.

I shall here only further suggest, that it cannot reasonably be thought, that the all-wise GOD should create Man, endued with a Desire of Felicity, eternal Felicity; and then leave him utterly destitute of all sufficient Direction for the attainment thereof; Seeing God and Nature, or his Providence, doth nothing, but for an End. And then seeing there can be no full and sufficient Direction

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of

of the Way to Happiness, but by Revelation, as shall under GOD be proved in the Sequel of this Treatise. Therefore some Revelation must be necessary; and then Reason itself must determine, that either there never was such Revelation; which, as Arch Bp. *Laud* observes, (against *Fisher*, 3d Edit. Pag. 72.) puts the Frustra upon God, with respect to Man's eternal Felicity. Or else, that the Scriptures which we now receive as the Word of God, is this necessary Revelation. For the Moral Evidences joined with the Excellency of the Doctrine which they contain, do no less forcibly chase away, all the pretended naughty and groundless Impostures, that can be set up to vie with those Holy Scriptures, than the Sun doth chase away the darkness of the Night. For *what is the Chaff to the Wheat, saith the Lord*, Jer. 23. ver. 28.

Now, tho' all the foregoing Arguments of Moral Proof, being chiefly drawn from Facts, and Historical Tradition, do not amount to a Mathematical Certainty, even when reduced into a Mathematical Form: A Certainty that doth force the Assent even of the most perversely Obstinate: Yet are they of such Moral Strength and Evidence, that no unbiassed Minds, who sincerely seek their own Salvation, and are not wilfully and perversely obstinate, if they duly and deliberately ponder them, can resist the Conviction they afford, or forbear to acquiesce, with respect

respect to the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Two Inferences from the foregoing Reasoning.

§ 5. Having now given a short View of the Moral Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures; I may proceed to draw from it, two plain Inferences, *viz.*

First, That if this Moral Evidence is truly such, as no unbiaſſed Minds, who ſincerely ſeek their own Salvation, and are not willfully and perverſely obſtinate, can forbear to acquieſce therein, or reſiſt the Conviction it affords; then without all peradventure, all they who have either received this Conviction; or who might receive it, if it were not hindred by their own Fault, *i. e.* through the neglect of due Examination, or by reaſon of their own Prejudices, or their willful obſtinacy; are reſpectively highly Criminal; and it is at their own dreadful Peril, if they do not embrace and ſubmit to the Direction of this Heavenly Revelation.

This Inference is obvious and natural; all who believe a Deity muſt needs aſſent to it: If the Infinite God hath indeed vouchſafed to afford a Revelation, it cannot fail to be the Voice of natural Reaſon, that the Truths thereby revealed, and the Laws therein preſcribed, are to be embraced and ſubmitted unto, as a neceſſary Duty. The abſolute Sovereignty of the God of Infinite

Truth, renders this a Duty absolutely necessary. And if this Revelation doth tend to advance the Perfection of human Nature, and to the attaining eternal Felicity; it is an inestimable Gift of the God of Infinite Love; and therefore to be received with the greatest Thankfulness, and the Returns of a suitable Love, as likewise absolutely necessary, by the same Voice of natural Reason.

Secondly, If this is in Fact the Case; then it must be likewise evident, that all such pretended Arguments, as tend to withdraw from those absolutely necessary Duties, of embracing, and submitting to, the Truths revealed, and the Laws prescribed, in this Revelation; and of receiving this inestimable Gift with the greatest Thankfulness, and the Returns of a suitable Love; are only false and dangerous Snares and Temptations; and ought to have no further Effect, than any such pretended Arguments and Reasoning, as tend to with-draw the Assent from all kind of Moral Evidence whatsoever; *i. e.* to with-draw the Assent from every Fact, or Truth, that is only capable of Moral Proof. And if this Absurdity should take place; then farewell to all the necessary Rules of human Life, or Society; and to all possible Means of attaining or discovering the Truth of controverted Facts, in the common Conduct of human Life.

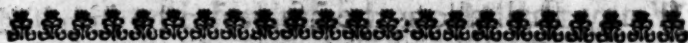
Withal,

Withal, such ensnaring Arguments, are beyond all comparison the more dangerous to Mankind, especially the weaker, and less thinking part of Mankind, which is the Multitude; when they relate to their eternal Interests: And therefore ought to be well guarded against, and avoided with the greater Caution. And therefore also to be strictly examined by all of any Capacity to do it, that the Falsity and dangerous Snare may be exposed. Because it is at the highest Peril, if any shall allow themselves to be imposed on, by them; and thereby misled into the violation of those absolutely necessary Duties, I have mentioned.

Every Christian is taught, that the Way to Salvation is not easy; that *the Gate is strait*; the Work of it laborious and difficult; the Temptations manifold and innumerable; the tendency of our frail Nature (as we are clothed with Flesh in our present State of Infirmary) to be led into those Temptations, very great, and that we have envious, restless, strong, and cunning Spiritual Enemies to wrestle against: And therefore have need of all the help that God hath offered us. Every Temptation therefore, to despise or neglect any such help, ought to awaken our circumspect, and most heedful Caution. Especially when there are incessantly busied, *Men full of all Subtlety, and Mischief, great slight and cunning Craftiness*
C. 3 *whereby*

whereby they lie in wait to deceive. (Act. 13. 30. Eph. 4. 14.)

I have given this short Hint, because this Caution is always necessary; and it was never more so than at present. And I have done it with a special Eye to the late Attempt of a subtile, bold, and dangerous Author, the present Champion of Infidelity, in his Book entituled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*.



CHAP. II.

Remarks upon the Grand Argument of the Author of Christianity as old as the Creation; as it is only generally considered.

§ I. **I**T has long been usual with the Adversaries of the Gospel Revelation, in combating the Evidence of the Moral Proof, by which it is established; to attack not only the traditional Conveyance, but also the Doctrines and the Mysteries it reveals; the History, the Prophecies, the Miracles, the seeming Inconsistencies, and the Contexture of the whole. And to ransack every Corner of the *Old and New Testaments*, to find Matter of Exception; even the minutest Things, and their Circumstances

ces have not escaped their Researches. But in spite of all this laborous Drudgery, the Truth and Evidence of the Divine Revelation, hath stood firm and unshaken. Every old Argument of Infidelity, and every new Attack have been baffled; and have only served to display the Truth and Excellency of the Divine Revelation in the Holy Scriptures; and to make that Truth and Excellency shine with the greater Lustre. But this Gentleman, parting with none of the Ways and Means of his old Friends, the Topics which have been their Artilleries, retaining even their mocking sarcaistical Insinuations, and their noise of Bible-Mad and Priest-Craft; seems withal to imagine, that he has found out a new unpresidented and more expedite Way, to over-turn all Revealed Religion, and blow it up, all at once.

The learned Mr. *Lessly* had obliged the World by an excellent small Treatise, *His short Way with the Deists*. This Deist makes a bold Attempt to confute him, and all the Volumes that have ever been written in Defence of Revealed Religion; by a yet shorter Way. Altho' mean time, it seems, he dares not trust entirely to his new Machine, by his Care to fill up his large Book, with the Old Paltry Stuff, that has been so long familiar to himself, and his Fraternity; which gives ground of Suspicion, that with all his Airs of Assurance, he doth not in his own Heart, so absolutely rely on the *perfect* Suf-

ficiency of his new Invention; but fear's there may still be large room, for the *usefulness* and *expediency*, yea even for the *necessity* of the old, less easy, laborious Drudgery, to support the black and darling Scene of Infidelity.

It is only of this grand Stratagem that I am here, in the first place, to treat; and thereafter I shall be obliged to examine his next great and boasted Argument, drawn from the want of an universal Manifestation of the Gospel; which will fall in to be discussed as the great Objection against the necessity of the Gospel, which I am to plead. These two, are the main Subject of his Book. The brevity I propose in this Treatise, doth not suffer me to treat of more. And if those Arguments which are the Foundation and Support of all the Battery he has erected; shall in a few Sheets, be plainly and sufficiently subverted; the rest of his Book, 'tis hoped, will do little harm.

And *First*. Let the grand Contrivance, that is truly the Invention of this ingenious Gentleman, be viewed; and briefly examined. He owns indeed that some Religion is necessary: But undertakes to prove, that there neither hath been, nor can be, any Bible Revelation. And the Argument by which he pretends to prove it, is this, *viz.*

“The Light of common Reason (which he call's Natural Religion) is fully sufficient, without Revelation. Because every Man
“ may

“ may be perfectly taught, and directed by it,
“ with respect to every thing that he is con-
“ cerned, either to know, believe, profess, or
“ practise. And hence he infer’s ; that all
“ further Revelation, is needless, superfluous,
“ and in vain ; and consequently that it ne-
“ ver hath been, nor can proceed from God,
“ who doth nothing in vain.”

Being now only here to take a general View of this Argument, before I proceed to the more particular Examination of it ; I desire first, it may be duly observed ; that the Subject of Controversy, is Matter of Fact, *i. e.* whether we actually have the Divine Revelation, or no ? The Evidence upon which we affirm, that we actually have it ; is a Moral Proof ; which is the only Proof or Evidence whereof a Matter of Fact is capable. We offer this Evidence to the unbiassed Examination of all the World. We pray, we importune them to examine it accurately. We urge them to this, from the vast Importance of it ; in as much as it concern’s their eternal Happiness, or Misery. We tell them, withal, that this Examination requires speedy Dispatch, with present, serious, and diligent Application ; because Life is uncertain, and no time is to be lost. For if Men are not presently diligent in this Inquiry, Death may overtake them, with an everlasting loss.

May not one here then calmly ask ; is it right, in the Case thus stated ; to amuse
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Mankind with any Arguments of an abstruse, subtile, and intricate Nature ; pretending to prove that this Fact is not ; and that it cannot be ? With any such Argument, as requires more Time, and Art, to sift and examine it thoroughly, than all the Proof of Fact, that is offered, doth ; with such an Argument, as one among an hundred, is not capable thoroughly to examine ? And does this Gentleman pretend to shuffle off, in a Question of Fact, of such high Importance, at this sneaking rate ? Would any Court of human Judicature admit, yea hearken to such whiffling Amusement ? or be diverted by it, from weighing the Proof of Fact ? or how long would it hearken ? Indeed in all Cases of Fact, while the Moral Proof is offered upon one side, the opposite Party is justly allowed to bring such Counter-proof and Evidence, on the other side, as is competent in Questions of Fact ; that the Evidence brought upon both Sides, may be compared, and judged. Common Equity requires this. It never was, it cannot be, refused a Deist, by Christians. But in Processes of Fact, no Judges will admit, as a Counter-proof or Evidence, such Arguments to be introduced, as are of an abstracted, subtile, and intricate Nature, and not only require more Time, and Art, to examine them thoroughly, than all the Proof of Fact that is offered, doth ; but are also beyond the Capacity of the Judges by whom they are

are to be examined. Now in this Question of Fact, whether we actually have the Divine Revelation, or no. Every Man is Judge, to whom the Moral Proof is offered. Is every Man then, is there one among a hundred, capable thoroughly to sift and examine, the Argument under view, that is offered by this subtle Gentleman, in this Case of Fact that is of the highest Importance? Is not the contrary manifest, upon the first and general view of it? tho' that will be much more manifest, when we proceed to the particular Examination of it. Is this the habile Way then, that the Proof of Facts is to be run down? Let all the Jury-Men in England judge of this.

§ 2. But further, and still upon the view of this Gentleman's grand Argument, as only generally considered. In all such Questions of Facts, and their Vouchers, as claim to be the Work of God; the wildness and extravagance of offering any such Argument as this, will be manifest, by applying it in another obvious Case, *viz.* That Almighty God was from all Eternity, of an absolute and perfect Self-sufficiency; the whole Creation was needless to him. Therefore this Fact of an actual created World, neither is, nor can be.

This Argument is the Gentleman's own, *Mutatis, Mutandis*; the first Proposition of it, he will not deny, he more than once asserts it, in his Book: And it doth only
place

place the absolute and perfect all-sufficiency of God, for his *absolute* and *perfect Sufficiency of the Light of common Reason*. This first Proposition is evident. His first Proposition, *viz. The absolute and perfect Sufficiency of the Light of common Reason*, is far from being so. And the Inference is his own, placing only the Fact of the World's Creation, instead of the Fact of Divine Revelation.

This seems to be an Argument *ad hominem*, i. e. Home upon the Opponent himself. And he has no way to answer it, without leading to the Answer of his own Argument, at the same time. The only Answer he can make, is this: That tho' there was no need of creating the World; yet it is an Effect, freely flowing from, and such a bountiful Communication of the Divine Goodness; as could not be, without a Creation. And we affirm, that there was great need of the Revelation we are defending, as an Effect, freely flowing from, and a bountiful Communication of the same Divine Goodness, in our great need of it. We are certain of the Truth of this Fact, *viz.* that God made the World, we see, we perceive, and feel a World about us. We know our selves are; and that we are part of this World. We know it could not make it self. We know there is a God its Maker; tho' at the same time, we know, it was not necessary for him to make it, being absolutely and perfectly Self-

Self-sufficient. But on the other hand, we doubt of the absolute and perfect Sufficiency of the Light of common Reason. Yea we have good Proof, and sad Experience, that it is not so, in the present State of Mankind. And consequently, that there is not only great Usefulness, but great Need of Help by Divine Revelation (as shall hereafter be rendered manifest.) And when we so evidently see, that in this Fact of a World actually created by God; it cannot be a true, but is an absurd Conclusion, which is inferred from that very Argument which is the Gentlemen's own. (*Mutatis Mutandis.*) *That this Fact of a created World, neither is, nor can be:* How then can it, under such weighty Disadvantages, on this Authors side, be truly conclusive or indeed have any Shadow of Proof, that this Fact of God's actual Help by the Revelation we enjoy, neither is, nor can be? The Falshood of the Gentleman's Premises shall be fully detected, when we proceed to the particular Examination of his Argument; of which we are now, only taking a general View.

One thing that is certainly true, is by this rendered obvious, *viz.* That when the Subject is of Matter of Fact, claiming to be the Work of God; if it doth not plainly imply a Contradiction to his holy and perfect Nature; it is hainous Presumption and Arrogance, in weak, short sighted Man, to pretend to prove; that it neither is, nor can be.

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In all other Cases, Facts claiming to be the Work of God, are only to be tried and examined, by the proper Vouchers of Fact. A little Art might suffice by this Gentleman's clever Way of disputing in Questions of Fact, to prove that there neither is, nor can be, such Cities, as *London*, or *Paris*; nor even such a Man as *Mr. Tindal*; tho' there are Clubs of Men that think him, not only very useful, but very needful.

§ 3. And to shew further, the Vanity, Presumption, and unconcluding Weakness, of this Way of disputing, Let us only suppose there is what we call an Intellectual World of Angels and Spirits, of a Nature far superiour to that of Man; that there are created, intelligent, Minds of a more comprehensive Understanding, and more perfect Knowledge, having more of Self-evident, or first Principles of Reason than poor weak Man hath, and a yet brighter and more quick discerning of the Truths that have connexion with them, or may be drawn from those Principles of Self-evidence. I do not ask of the Gentleman (tho' we find him owning there is a Devil) to own this as a Truth existing in Fact; because there is no other clear Evidence of it; but what the Scriptures afford; but we are sure, all this implies no Contradiction; and therefore we may suppose it. Now tho' their Knowledge shall be supposed to be a *perfect sufficient Rule of their Duty*, in all the Relations wherein

wherein they stand, with respect to God, and their fellow Creatures : Yet will this Gentleman pretend to prove, to demonstrate from this, That God cannot augment their Knowledge by some new Addition, that may both add to their Perfection, and encrease their Duty : Yea that he cannot do this by some further Discoveries and Manifestations of his own Nature and Perfections, which to them is Revelation ? Must not this be still possible, so long as God is infinite, and they are finite Creatures ? Doth he know all that God can do ? Shall Man presume in this manner to limite his God and Maker ? Especially by such a pitiful Argument as this : To limite him from the very possibility of affording to weak Man himself, any Help, however *useful* it may be, yea however *needful* ; if the poor weak Man himself thinks it *needless* ?

The Gifts of God are often, *Satis, Superque* ; i. e. not only what is sufficient, but more than enough. He *gives liberally to all*. Such is the Divine Bounty. And yet because this Man thinks forsooth, the *Light of common Reason is sufficient, absolutely, perfectly sufficient* ; will he from this Confidence of his, pretend to conclude, that the bountiful Hand of God is shortned, and bound up, so as he cannot give us more ?

It is Matter of Fact we are treating of ; the Question is, whether the Holy Scriptures, and the Revelation by them, be the Work
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Gift of God, or no? If God hath afforded them; doth not he know better than we can do, what may be useful, or needful, for us? Let the Truth of the Fact therefore be examined, by the only proper Proof of Fact; which is only Moral Evidence. And let not vain, short sighted, Man pretend to teach God, what help may be useful for us, or what help may be needful: Nor boldly prescribe to Him, what He can, or what He cannot, do. We are sure there is one Principle, that is evident by the Light of common Reason, *viz.* That whatever is the Work of God, is the Effect of infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

It seems to be a blasphemous Boldness to affirm, that it is not possible for God, to reveal the Knowledge of himself, and of his Mind or Will, more or less, as it pleaseth Himself; to his own intelligent Creatures, any manner of way He thinks fit. Are we not all of us Conscious, that one Man, an intelligent Creature, weak and imperfect as he is, can reveal his Mind to another Man? *viz.* By Word, by Writing, by the Gesture and Countenance, by the Eye, and by the Hand, and by other Signs of great Variety, For I need not here mention an Intellectual World of Angels, and Societies of Spirits, or of their conversing together; to a Gentleman who denies that Revelation, which informs us of them.

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Doth not this Author himself allow, that God reveals his Mind to Man, to every Man; not only by the Light of common Reason; but likewise by various other ways; By the Works of Creation and the Impressions which these convey to the rational Mind! Or as this Author affects to express himself, in imitation of the learned and accurate Mr. Woolaston; *by the Nature of Things, and the Relations they stand in, to God, and to one another*; i. e. as I conceive, by their conveying the Notices and Intimations of God's Will, to the intelligent Mind. Or as our Author also expresseth it, after the same Pattern, in a yet more enlarged manner; *Pag. 20. Line 1. By every thing within him, and without him.* And if so; then why not by Revelation also, as well as any other way, if he thinks meet so to do it? Why not by external Revelation, as well as *by the Nature of Things, and the Relation they stand in to God, and to one another*? Doth not he know the Natures of all Things much better than we do, who have no perfect Knowledge of the Nature of any one thing, or of all the Relations wherein it may stand? Hath this Man such comprehensive and adequate Knowledge of the infinite God, as to determine the utmost that he can do; in any thing that doth not imply a Contradiction? Shall poor weak Man pretend in this manner to limite his God and Maker? But to hasten to an End of the general view of this wild grand Argument.

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§ 4. Fi-

§ 4. Finally, it seems to me impossible that the Gentleman himself, being a cunning Man, as some of his despightful Strokes and Insinuations testify; can think there is any weight, in this his grand Argument. Because the Ideas it offer's, and the Terms it carries, can never be united, to the forming of his Conclusion, tho' all his mentioned Premisses were allowed; without the adding of some other *Medium* to link them together. For *First*. The whole Argument must stand or fall, by the begging and granting, of this Question, or some other such false Principle; *viz.* That every thing is *useless, superfluous, needless, and in vain*; that is not absolutely necessary.

When I had look't over his Book, to try if I could therein find this *Medium*, or necessary coupling of his Argument; or any other *Medium* that can supply its place: I observ'd a Passage in *Chap. 10. Page 115.* where he is pretending to prove, "That God cannot give Laws obliging Men to observe any such positive things, as would not be binding, were they not imposed. His Words are; Can there be any Cause, why a Being which never acts unnecessarily, and whose Commands are, all, the Effects of infinite Wisdom, should interpose; (*viz.* in such positive things.) 'Tis so far from being necessary for God so to interpose, in such Cases as these, that it only serves for a handle for humane Imposition. &c."

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His Words are faithfully copied : And if I am not mistaken, it is here supposed by him; to be a great Absurdity, to think that a Being of infinite Wisdom, can at all, act unnecessarily. If any attentive Reader shall consider the Words as an Argument to prove that God cannot impose any such positive things, as would not be binding if they were not imposed ; it will not be easy to fix any other sense upon them. For, if the infinitely wise God, is considered as an active Being, essentially operating ; (*viz.* either within, or without Himself.) In this Case, to say, That he cannot act, or never acts, unnecessarily, is much the same, as to say ; That he is not a free, but a necessary Agent.

Now if this wild and extravagant Principle is the meaning of his Words, as I fear it is ; from sundry Insinuations throughout his Book ; tho' I do not find it any where else, expressly affirmed by him, or directly urged as a Topic for establishing his Inferences ; then it is this false Principle, That God cannot act otherwise than necessarily, that may be the *Medium* requisite for coupling, or connecting, of his Argument. I would incline to fix any other Sense upon the Words cited from him, which the Words can bear. If I mistake their meaning, he is himself the cause of it : For his own Words as they are brought to prove the Point at which he aims, have led me to it. And I shall be glad to find him explaining the Words to any other

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Sense,

Sense, which I think he is obliged to do ; or otherwise to allow that I have rightly understood them.

However, it hath been suggested to me, that perhaps his meaning in the cited Words is this ; *viz. That if Revelation was not necessary for Men, God could not (in point of Wisdom) have given one.* And that this is a Proposition, from which much of the reasoning is drawn, throughout his Book. And therefore altho' it is a Proposition quite different from his Words, as they are above faithfully copied : Yet seeing it will truly serve as the *Medium* that is necessary for connecting of his Argument ; and that it is a Principle from which he often doth reason. Therefore if it may be a Favour to the Gentleman, I shall admit of this, as the meaning of the Words cited, as well as the necessary *Medium*, that is further requisite to connect his Argument. Well then, we have now, Two *Mediums*, which must either both or one of them, be supposed, begged, and granted, as being necessary to connect the grand Argument.

The first of them is this false Principle ; *That every thing is useless, superfluous, needless, and in vain, that is not necessary.*

The second of them, *viz. That if Revelation was not necessary for Men, God could not (in point of Wisdom) have given it ;* is a Principle, no less false ; being also fruitful of gross Absurdities that follow from it.
And

And at the least, one of these two false Principles must be supposed, in order to link the grand Argument together, *viz.* in this manner,

“ The Light of common Reason is fully
“ sufficient without Revelation. Therefore
“ all such Revelation as is not by this Light
“ of common Reason, is useless, superfluous,
“ needless, and in vain, and altogether un-
“ necessary. And if it was not necessary to
“ Men, God could not (in point of Wisdom)
“ give it, And consequently it neither hath
“ been, nor can be. Because it is not only
“ absurd to imagine that God would give
“ any thing to Men that is useless, superflu-
“ ous, needless, and in vain, but also that it
“ could consist with his infinite Wisdom, to
“ give such Revelation to Men, if it is not
“ necessary to them.”

If he had dressed his Argument, in some such shape as this, so as to include all the necessary Members for connecting it : And addressed himself to endeavour the proving of all the Falshoods that are in it ; tho’ it would have been a wild and prophane Task, yet it would have resembled a Disputant. But all the Shape he has given it, would be shameful, in a Novice. Yet there is Design even in this ; for at least it raises a little Mist, and serves to veil the Poison that is lurking.

The Absurdity and Falshood of both of those Principles which I have mentioned, as being either both ; or at least one of them, necessary for connecting this Gentleman’s Argument

that is under view, must necessarily be shewn; But naturally this must be deferred till I come to the particular Examination of that boasted Argument, which I have hitherto been only generally considering. And therefore I delay the Confutation of them until near the end of the third Chapter.

And now, upon the general view, which we have already taken of it; this new Invention to batter down our Holy Religion, and the revelation of the Divine Will which it affords; to render our Bibles useless, in *England*, and over all the World; especially as it is applied to run down all Proof of plain matter of Fact; makes a strange and shocking Figure: And yet more especially as the Author and Inventer represents it, without any Medium that is necessary to connect it: May we not well be astonished at the Assurance of any Man of Sense, pretending to urge it, with an Air of serious Gravity? But it is yet more astonishing that any of common Sense, should be stumbled, or affected by it. For how much soever unthinking Rakes, and all who are willing to be imposed on, from a corrupt desire of unbridled Freedom, may applaud it: Yet even from the general view of it; all that are unbiassed, must be convinced, that the Author has little Credit by it. Such a pitiful Whim, and trifling Amusement, in a Matter so serious, and of such high Importance, brings a new Disgrace upon the Cause of Infidelity. If *Porphyrie*, or *Celsus*,

Celsus, or the witty *Lucian*, &c. those old Free-thinkers, could look back, to observe this sorry Arguing, in the Champion of their late Posterity, our modern Deists; they would themselves upbraid it; and be ready to ply their Scholars with the Birch: Such pitiful disputing could never have entred into their learned Heads.

§ 5. 'Tis truly astonishing to find a Man who wants not his share of Knowledge, fraughted with such unreasonable Prejudice as to imagine he can persuade any thinking People, that it is not possible for God to impart his Mind to Mankind, any other way, than by the mere Light of common Reason: And to adventure by such unconnected Argument, with such bold Assurance as if 'twere demonstration, to hiss all external Revelation off the Stage. 'Tis pity a Man of his Sagacity should have such Prejudice against a Dispensation and Gift of God, so invaluable, so useful, so familiar, so admirably and beautifully adapted to the humane State. But why all this Prejudice? There must surely be some other Motive of it, different from the grand Argument he has advanced: And it is not very difficult to conjecture what it is. It seems to be a certain Spight he has conceived against a Society of Men. For this is still displayed at every turn; being the perpetual Conclusion of all his licentious Reasoning; whatever be the Premisses. The Priests, and for their sake, the Priest-

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hood,

hood, is the Butt against which all his Battery is levelled : Tho' it is through the Sides of our Holy Religion, and the Scriptures.

All sober Christians must own it, to be a lamentable thing when Men of that rank, that sacred Order, give Handle or Temptation to such monstrous Eruptions and Sal-lies of Resentment ; by their own Conduct ; by pride and affectation of worldly Grandeur, or an haughty Deportment, by ambitious Claims, or sinister and crafty Arts to promote them, by Covetousness, or a seditious Temper, by Superstition, or Idolatry, remissness in their Duty, or a persecuting Spirit, or any other immoral Way, tho' not enumerated by this Author. But wherever such Abuses are either really existing, or only supposed ; what is the need of recourse to Topics of Infidelity, for invective ? Do not the Holy Scriptures afford a pure and plenteous Magazine of Weapons, for lashing the Criminal with a far greater, and laudable Severity ; when the Scourge is merited ? And doth not common Equity require to distinguish between the Innocent and the Guilty ?

As the best things become always the worst, the most noxious and unsavory, when they are corrupted : So corrupt Clergymen are certainly of all things the most odious, and detestable. When they answer the Ends of their Holy Office, they are the *Salt of the Earth, a Treasure in Earthen Vessels,*
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the Lights of the World, and to be esteemed highly for their Works sake. But if the Salt hath lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under Foot of Men. But even at the worst, it is against the Dictates and Light of common Reason, to draw an Argument against the Holy Office, from the corruption of the Men that are vested in it. For at this rate, the universal Corruption of Mankind, would conclude against all Religion whatsoever, both natural and revealed: Yea against all Societies, and all Authority, and all the Offices on Earth.

I have transiently dropt this in the end of this *Chapter*; because a great Part of our Gentleman's Book, is plainly levelled against the Priesthood; seeking handle from the corruption of the Men that minister in Holy Things, to conclude against their Office, and the Revelation by which it is established. By his enlarging so much on this, it is plain, that he lays more Stress upon it, than upon his grand Argument it self; which ought certainly to awaken in all Clergymen, a more circumspect Care, to let their *Light shine before Men*, that they may adorn the *Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; conforming exactly in all their Conduct to the Rules of the Holy Gospel which they preach; that thereby they may be able to convince Gainsayers, so as they who are of the

the contrary way, may be ashamed, having no Evil to say of them.

During the first three Centuries of Christianity, when all the Potentates on Earth, were bent to extirpate it; the shining and exemplary Sanctity of the Ministers of Religion, did exceedingly conduce to the universal propagation of the Gospel. And wherever the Power and Energy of it, is by the Corruption and obstinate Wickedness of Mankind, abated and decayed; the natural and proper way to retrieve this, by the Divine Blessing; is the conspicuous Reformation, the exemplary Piety, and disinterested probity of the Priesthood. . And now, when the open and avowed Attempts of Infidelity, grown bold by Number, in our degenerate Times, are by loud and threatening Alarm, pretending to lay the Ax to the Root of our Holy Religion; 'tis high time, for the Clergy of this Island, to bestir themselves, and guard their Flock from this destroying Wolf, by all the force of their united and industrious Care.

But at the same time, 'tis certain, that the strongest Arguments, even in the obvious weakness of reasoning, on the side of the Adversaries, will never give due check to the growing Tide of Infidelity, without a conspicuous Reformation of the spiritual Guides. The Doctrine and Worship of the Church of *England*, are pure and uncorrupted; the Learning and Piety of her Clergy
have

have been splendid and famous throughout the World. And now her Priests and all her serious People, have a crying and loud Alarm, to rouse and revive her former Spirit : And more especially, the exemplary Virtue, and truly primitive Piety of their Ancestors ; without which, all their Labour to dissipate the rampant and spreading Contagion of Infidelity will be fruitless, and in vain.

§ 6. The Reader may mind, that in *Sect. 4.* of this same *Chapter*, to avoid the taking Advantage from any unguarded manner in which my Adversary hath expressed himself, I was willing to substitute this Proposition ; namely. That if Revelation was not necessary for Men, God could not (in point of Wisdom) give it, as one of the Mediums necessary to connect his Argument ; rather than this, That a Being of infinite Wisdom, cannot, at all, act unnecessarily, which did indeed seem to me, to be the plain import of his Words, there cited. The Proposition which I have substituted ; is a Principle from which he doth often reason ; and therefore he must allow it. But least his Meaning should really be, *That a Being of infinite Wisdom, cannot, at all, act unnecessarily* : I therefore think I ought to remark briefly upon this absurd, and pernicious Principle.

Now had this Author, plainly, directly, and expressly, urged this, (whereas if it is his

his Sentiment and Meaning, he only sily coucheth it) the staring wildness of it, would have startled every considerate Reader. For indeed, it is a Principle of Horror and Confusion. A Principle that destroys all the Notions and Possibility of a Divine Providence, as well in the Government of this material World, as over the intelligent Creatures that are in it. A Principle which in the Consequences of it, would make this created World, and every thing that occurs in it, absolutely necessary; introducing the absolute, and unalterable, blind Fate, that has been the Doctrine of the most brutal and absurd Philosophy. A Principle that leaves no place, for Gratitude to God, or Trust in him, or Prayer to him: Subverting at once, all the Motives and Springs of moral and religious Duty, from the hope and prospect of Reward, or fear of Punishment. If the Liberty of acting by free Choice, is any degree of Perfection in the intelligent Creature; must not this be more eminently in the infinitely perfect Being, who is the bountiful Bestower of it?

Indeed that God doth necessarily exist; and likewise, that he can never interpose by any act that is inconsistent with the eternal, infinite Perfection, and necessary Rectitude of his Holy Nature; are manifest Truths, by the Light of common Reason. But it is no less manifest by the same Light; that he can freely interpose, according to his own
Will

Will and Pleasure, by any Act whatsoever, that is consistent with the same necessary Rectitude of his own Nature. *He that planteth the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formeth the Eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not know?* This is a way of reasoning beyond all Contradiction. And shall not he then who gave Man the Faculty of acting freely, without necessity, be himself capable of acting so? Shall he be himself incapable to interpose in any thing otherwise than necessarily?

If this Gentleman's Book did not abound in dangerous and extravagant Insinuations, which seem to be designedly hinted by him, to raise and cherish, profane and atheistical Suggestions; I should never have troubled the Reader, nor my self with this Remark upon that absurd Principle, which the way he takes to express himself in the Citation that occasions it, doth lead me to; among the many Instances which his Book doth afford, I shall only mention one, in his Page 388. where the Philosophers are introduced, as not to be drawn into the Belief, that a Devil (in the Serpent) seduced Eve. Because:

“ They could not see, how an infinitely good
“ God could permit a most malicious cunning Spirit, to work on the Weakness of a
“ Woman, just placed in a new World;
“ without interposing in this unequal Conflict, or giving notice of any such wicked
“ Spirit;

“ Spirit ; Angels neither good, nor bad being
“ mentioned in the History of the Creation.
“ — The most unaccountable is that God
“ should continue to suffer, this subtile and
“ malignant Spirit, endowed with an uni-
“ versal Knowledge of what is past, and a
“ deep penetration into Futurity ; to range
“ about, deceiving and circumventing Man-
“ kind.

“ The poor *Indians*, you know, when our
“ Missionaries give such an Account of the
“ Devil, say ; is not your God a great God,
“ and Lover of Mankind ? Why does he
“ then permit the Devil to be continually
“ doing them such infinite hurt ? Why is
“ he not under Confinement, if not deprived
“ of a Being of which he has made him-
“ self unworthy ? With us, one who does
“ not hinder a Mischief, when it is in his
“ Power, is thought not much better than
“ he who does it.”

Good God ! how much Poison is there
here insinuated ? For tho’ here he would only
seem, to be personating a Deist, as reason-
ing against the Account which *Moses* gives,
of the fall of Man ; together with a squint-
ing Insinuation against the believing there
are Angels, either good or bad : And to
be offering an Argument, for proving there
can be no such thing as Diabolical Temp-
tation ; which borders upon Atheism ; yet
it is plain, that his drift (tho’ he sily couch-
eth it) is to shake the belief of a Deity.

As

As if it were inconsistent with the Being of of an infinitely holy, wise, just, and powerful God; to permit any thing that is hurtful; or any kind of Evil, either Physical or Moral. And then he here leaves this wild Reasoning, to the Atheists; without any Antidote, or the least Remark upon it (in his usual manner) as a Sneer upon the Simplicity of such credulous Fools, as do imagine, there can be a Deity that permits this. And have not all candid People just Cause to be heedfully aware, of such dangerous, pretended Masters of Morality? For while this Gentleman is pretending only to serve the Cause of Deists; how sily is the more deadly Poison of Atheism, here insinuated?

And seeing this is mentioned, altho' he has omitted, yet I ought not to neglect, the affording of some Antidote. For tho' it may seem to be a Digression; yet the ingenious Reader, will not think I go much out of my Road; while by the way, I step a little aside; to guard against a dangerous Passage of this Author's Book.

Well then; *First*, is it any Absurdity, that the infinitely good God, should have created intelligent Beings, of different Orders, and a different Nature; all of them Images of himself, and his own Perfections? And that they might be more eminently after his own Image, should have endued them, with a Power of acting by free Election, without which they could not be capable of being
moral

moral Agents, accountable to himself for their Actions. I'm sure, there is none of a sound and sober Mind, can think there is any absurdity in this. For we are all conscious, that Man is such a created intelligent and free Being; and it is thereby he is capable of being a moral Agent, accountable to his Creator, for his Actions. And therefore it cannot be absurd that God should have created more intelligent Beings of different Orders, and a different Nature, all of them endued with the same Power of a free Election, constituting them also capable of moral Agency.

Well, if this is allowed, is it *Secondly*, any absurdity, that this infinitely good God, should have placed such intelligent created Beings (endued with this Capacity of being moral Agents, by this Power of a free Election) into a State of Probation? Seeing by their being placed in this State of Probation, they have opportunity of exerting their Freedom, by yielding to himself, a willing, free, and unconstrain'd Duty, of Love, Gratitude, dependent Submission, and intire Obedience, which otherwise they could not have been capable to yield him. I'm no less sure, that none of a sound and sober Mind, can think there is any Absurdity in this. For we are all conscious, that Man is thus placed in a State of Probation; and therefore it can never be absurd that it should be so, with other intelligent Beings.

Well,

Well, supposing there is no Absurdity in all this. Is it *Thirdly*, any Absurdity, to think it possible, that any such intelligent created Beings, left to the freedom of their own Will, could ever by their own Choice, in any Instance, violate their Duty of Love, Gratitude, dependent Submission, and intire Obedience? It must indeed be own'd to be a very absurd and wicked thing, for such free intelligent moral Agents, actually to do so. But the very supposal of their being endued with the Power of free Election, doth evidently clear the possibility of their doing so, from all Absurdity. Yea that Man hath done, and daily doth so, we are all conscious. And therefore it can be no Absurdity, to think this possible with regard to other intelligent Beings.

And then *Fourthly*; If this is possible in any one Instance, it can be no absurdity to think it possible that some such intelligent moral Agents, may have shaken off, and abandoned all Duty, all Love, Gratitude, dependent Submission, and Obedience, to their Creator; by an absolute and intire Abuse of their Freedom. For if constraint in any one Instance is inconsistent with freedom of Election, it must equally be so, in all Instances.

And so, at length, we find it possible, there may be some such apostate, malevolent, rebellious, created intelligent Beings, of a Nature different from our's, and of a diffe-

rent Order, and higher Capacities; that may have set up their own Will in a direct Contradiction to the Will of their Creator. And that the possibility of this, is no Absurdity.

And then *Fifthly*. If it is possible there are such apostate, rebellious, malevolent Spirits, acting in direct Contradiction to the Will of their Creator: Is it any Absurdity to think it possible that they may be industrious to employ their malicious Cunning to entice Man, their fellow Creature, into the same Rebellion? Especially, if they observed, or suspected him, to be created, to replenish the Vacancy, which their Revolt, and Apostasy, had occasioned in the intellectual World: Is there any Absurdity to think it possible that their Despight and Opposition of God, who had justly rejected them, should prompt them to this? Surely the possibility of all this, can never infer any Absurdity, nor be any way inconsistent with God's infinite Goodness. And therefore, neither can the actual Existence of all this.

Well: But perhaps it may be absurd to think, that "an infinitely good God, could permit a malicious cunning Spirit, to work on the Weakness of a Woman, just placed in a new World, without interpoling in this unequal Conflict; or giving notice of any such wicked Spirit." For it is in this manner that the Gentleman doth reason. And in Answer to this; there are several Circumstances, to be separately considered.

As *First*. Tho' the permitting a malicious cunning Spirit, to be still exerting his subtle Malice, can infer no Absurdity, yet if it is to work on the Weakness of a Woman, just placed in a new World, without interposing in this unequal Conflict. Is there nothing of Absurdity in this? I answer.

First. That her being placed in a new World; or in a World of longer standing, neither increaseth, nor lesseneth the Difficulty. So this Circumstance, is nothing but Amusement.

Secondly. Why doth he say the Weakness of a Woman? Tho' without Prejudice to the Cause I plead for, it may be allowed she was the weaker Vessel, even in the State of Innocence: Yet then, and in the intire Perfection of her Nature, as she proceeded from the perfect Hand of her Creator, she had sufficient Strength of Mind, to have resisted any Temptation to transgress the Divine Command, if she had been duly willing to exert it. But then further, Tho' it should be allowed that the Conflict was unequal without Assistance. Yet why did she not at least consult her Husband, who might have afforded timely Advice, and thereby acted the part of a Guardian to her? Or if the divine Interposul was needful; did she ask it, and was refused? We are taught by Christianity, that if we *resist the Devil, he will flee from us*. And can we imagine that in the State of Perfection, she was ignorant

of this? We are taught that *God who is faithful, will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with every Temptation, afford us a way of escape*; but withal, that we are to ask his help: Can it consist with a State of Perfection, that she needed this Instruction? We may be well assured that if her natural Power had not been sufficient to resist any Temptation, she would never have been left to the freedom of her own Will. Yea add further too, That the interposal of the Divine Assistance would never have been wanting, if it had been call'd for. But then

Thirdly, says this Gentleman, she had no notice given her of any such apostate wicked Spirit. But who told him this? And how is he assured of it? as the heavy Punishment of Man's Transgression is a warning to all the intellectual World of created Beings, who retain their Integrity: So is the far more heavy Punishment of the apostate Angels; as being without all hope of Remedy. And how can these be a Warning unless they are notified? Therefore it is much more likely, on the other hand, that our first Parents had the Intimation of the fall of Angels; as of great Use, to keep them upon their watchful Guard. And if Angels have sometimes conversed with fall'n Man, which we know is possible, and therefore believe it, as being revealed: Is it not likewise possible that they may have conversed with our first

first Parents in their State of Innocence, and informed them too, of the Apostacy of those of their own Species. The very possibility of such Intimation, subverts the Gentleman's Hypothesis; at least so as no Argument can be drawn from it. Withal, to us as Christians the probability that our first Parents had this Intimation to be upon their guard is the greater, that to engage our selves to be continually upon our guard; it is notified to us, that there are *Angels who kept not their first Estate, and left their own Habitation*; that there are *Principalities, and Powers* of them; that the *Prince of Darkness* (called also *Lucifer*) or the *Devil goeth about continually as a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour*. And then further; who can be positively certain, that there was not some Divine Suggestion interposed, and wilfully rejected by *Eve*? Is this impossible? The very possibility of this also destroys any Argument that can be drawn from all this Authors complicated precarious Hypotheses. But without recourse to any such Suppositions, on the side against which he disputes; If *Eve* had power sufficient to have resisted the Temptation, all the Difficulty vanisheth.

But our Author adds something as a further Aggravation of Absurdity, viz. in these Words, which I did not before transcribe. "And yet that after the Fact was committed, God should thus revenge it on all their

“innocent Posterity for ever, by cursing the Ground, &c.” When the &c. is advanced; an Answer to it will be found. But as it was never affirmed by Christians, that the Ground is to bear the Curse for ever; but on the contrary they expect a renewed Earth; and the times of *Restitution of all Things*, which *God hath spoken by the Mouth of his Holy Prophets since the World began: Act. 3. 21.* So there may be a good Reason assign’d, why the Earth was cursed for Man’s Transgression. The Earth was originally given to be the Dominion and Property of Man as Lord of the Terrestrial World: And so the Curse upon the Ground, and all that hath Life therein, either Animal, or Vegetative, by being cursed for his Sake, becomes thereby the Punishment of Man.

I proceed to what this Gentleman, in the Citation from him, represents as a yet greater Absurdity, *viz.* “The most unaccountable is, that God should continue to suffer this “subtile malignant Spirit — to range about, “deceiving and circumventing.” If he can run down the Notion of a tempting Devil, as an Absurdity; it would be the gaining of one Point, to the cause of Infidelity. But where lies the Absurdity of this, if the fighting against this Enemy is considered as a part of our Warfare, in this State of Probation, under the *Captain of our Salvation*; who is able, and hath promised, to afford
such

such Aid, as may render us *more than Conquerours*, if we are not wanting to our selves? who warns us of our Danger by this formidable Enemy; and instructs us in the Weapons that are necessary to obtain the Victory; and how to use them? But if this Author is not on the side of our Captain, and avowedly engaged in the War against him, it is nothing strange to find him pleading, to render us secure, as if there were no Danger.

And now the Question of the poor *Indians*, enters; as if it were to crown the Absurdity of imagining there can be any tempting Devil: But is really such an Argument as directly strikes against the existence of a Deity, if it did prove any thing at all, *viz.* *One who does not hinder a Mischief, when it is in his Power; is thought not much better than he who does it.* And here he leaves it, without any Answer, or the least Remark. As what doth either prove there is no Devil, or will be a Sneer upon the Credulity of those who can believe there is a Deity. *Ex ungue Leonem*, i. e. May not the *Lion* (the Atheist) here be discerned by his Claws? For this Argument which is here put into the Mouth of the poor *Indians*, without the least Antidote; is the very same with the strongest Argument of Atheists, against the Existence, and Providence of a Deity.

They plead, there can be no Being of infinite Power and Goodness, governing the World : Because there is Evil in it. For if he were of infinite Power he could hinder it : And if of infinite Goodness, he would do so. But there is much Evil in the World. Therefore, &c.

The Answer is ; *First*, with regard to Moral Evil, or Sin ; That God having created intelligent Beings, endued with freedom of acting according to their free Will and Choice, by which they are moral Agents, which is a Perfection : In this Case, if infinite Power and Goodness should be exerted to constrain their Will ; it would be a Violence upon their Nature, as they are free moral Agents ; and so destroy that freedom of Choice, they are endued with. And therefore in this Case, the Permission of moral Evil, is necessary in the Nature of Things. And *Secondly*, As to Physical Evil, and Calamities of all kind ; this is the natural Effect of moral Evil ; the necessary Consequent and Attendant of Sin. If there had been no Sin, there could have been no Calamity. And thus, the intelligent and free moral Agent, is the Author of Sin : And Sin is the *Pandora's Box* that hath introduced Calamity. And if the freedom of the moral Agent, is preserved ; the permission of Sin is necessary. And so the permitting of Devils and wicked Men, is no Absurdity, nor inconsistent with the infinite Power, and Good.

Goodness of God ; who by the Wisdom of his Providence, can set Bounds to their Malice, baffle all their Counsels and pernicious Projects, at his Pleasure ; bring Good out of their malicious Wickedness ; protect his own faithful Servants ; and punish all malicious Practices, and Endeavours. If God permits the Devil, or a corrupt Author to be active in tempting Mankind into Infidelity : Must he therefore, *be altogether such an one as themselves*, or little better. The Blasphemy gives Horrour.

Although I only proposed in this Chapter, to give a general View of this Author's grand Argument : Yet I have thought it proper, here, to guard against those dangerous Insinuations of deadly Poison, in the two Things mentioned : That by this Sample of artful Insinuation, familiar to him ; his Readers may be awakened, and aware of their Danger. And withal, the Remarks relating to those two Things, may be otherways useful.

I proceed now to examine his grand Argument, more particularly ; in the following Chapters.

CHAP. III.

A more particular Examination of his grand Argument.

§ 1. **T**HIS Author whose grand Argument I am now more particularly to examine, in *Chap. xii. Page 180, 181, 182.* Applies himself to give an Explanation, of the Sense and Meaning in which he is to be understood, when he mentions, the Light of common Reason. And while he doth so, he descends into the defining of a Number of those Terms that are used by Logicians; I am neither here to enumerate them, nor to examine the Accuracy. Only I may say, that a Man, furnished with such Pompous Apparatus of Logic; ought at least to have kept to the most necessary Rules: And especially to have connected the Propositions of his Arguments, with some such intervening Ideas, or Mediums, as were plausible. I have partly pointed to his Neglect of this; in my general Survey of his grand Argument: And we shall probably see more of this hereafter. It is sufficient here to intimate, That I allow, The Light of common Reason; to be, as he says, in more Words; *That natural Light, common to Mankind, by which our Faculties of reasoning, do not only perceive, all Self-evident Truths that are presented to them; but*
also,

also, all such other Truths, as have a necessary Connection with those Truths of Self-evidence. And that such Truths as are only probable; have only a probable Connexion with those Self-evident Truths.

And that the common Justice due to both Sides, may be mutual; I cannot doubt but this Gentleman, will on his part allow me, this one *Postulatum*, viz. That by a perfect Rule of moral Duty; we are to understand; a perfect System of the necessary moral Doctrines, or Truths; as well as the Duties which those Doctrines do infer, and bind unto. Because, if this System is not perfect, we can never perfectly know the Duties which they infer. It was necessary to premise this, that we may understand one another, and be understood by the Reader. I now proceed to

A Particular View of this Light of common Reason, which he affirms to be a perfect Rule of moral Duty.

§ 2. Let us now take an attentive view of this Light of common Reason, as above explained; that we may thereby, the better discern; whether indeed it can be, or cannot be, a perfect Rule of moral Duty?

And First, we shall find it, in some of those humane Minds to which it is common; exceedingly heightened and encreased: And in other Minds, no less weak, dimmed, and obscure: According as some Minds are of a brighter

brighter Genius, and have enjoyed better Opportunities of Education, Conversation, Leisure, and Retirement : Or as Men have been careful to improve those Opportunities of cultivating the Mind ; by Study and frequent Meditation, an assiduous Application to the means of Improvement, and an habitual Exercise of Reasoning ; by which their Knowledge is encreased, and the very Capacities of the Mind whetted, heightened, enlarged ; and by this Use and Cultivation of them, rendred more habile, nimble, and expert.

Where as on the contrary, the Minds of other Men, are naturally more dull and blunt, of a lower Genius and less Capacity. And as these are more than ten thousand to one of the other sort : So even of them, by far the greatest part, are by their Circumstances, and Situation of Life, necessarily left destitute of the more favourable and happy Opportunities of Education, Conversation, Leisure, and Retirement : The necessary Care for the means of Life, or their own Indolence, Laziness ; Aversion from all Study, deliberate Reflection, and assiduous Meditation ; renders their Minds less fit for, and almost quite incapable of receiving and entertaining, speculative abstracted Ideas, or of reasoning upon them. For as the Strength and Agility of the Body ; the Vigour and Activity of the Arms, Limbs, Hands, and Feet, is encreased by the use
of

of them, and impaired by the disuse : So the Vigour, Liveliness, and natural Capacities of the Mind, are augmented, heightened, and improved, by the habitual Exercise of them ; and on the other hand, impaired by a restive Disuse and Indolence.

And consequently, this Light of common Reason, as it shines in different Men, must be respectively more, or less, bright, or obscure. And all this is so obvious, that it needs no Proof. It cannot be contradicted by any who have been conversant with Mankind. Yea every Man that hath the least degree of Education, is conscious of it, with respect to himself ; and that this Light of common Reason hath gradually arisen in his own Mind, from a small Twilight, to greater Brightness. So that it being in some, more faint and obscure ; and in others more bright and lively ; the Degrees of it, in different Minds, are almost in a Variety, that is equal to the Number of Mankind.

Secondly, Altho' every human Mind, that is not wholly sottish, stupid, and incapable, doth necessarily assent to every Self-evident Proposition or Truth, as soon as it is plainly presented to it ; yet as those Self-evident Truths are but few in number ; so they are only the few and best cultivated Minds, that are habituated to the frequent Consideration of them : A few only, who have any Collection, Register, and Stock of them, fixed in the Memory by deep Impression : Which
may

may serve them as Oracles to be consulted; or a Treasure to be had recourse unto, upon every emergent Occasion. And there are yet fewer, even of those best cultivated Minds, who are either inclined; or habituated, to consult those Oracles, to have due recourse to their Treasure of Self-evident Principles, upon emergent Occasions of moral Duty. That such Self-evident Axioms as relate to moral Duty, are generally least of all consulted, is a sad Truth, that is it self almost Self-evident: For it is only to be proved, by every Man's consulting his own Breast, and Conscience, and attending to the Light, and hearkening to the Voice which that doth afford: Such is the universal Corruption of Mankind, that every one is more or less conscious of this: And yet it is no less evident, that from this, it must necessarily follow, That the Use and Benefit of this Light of common Reason, tho' in some it may be very great; yet in others it must be small and inconsiderable, with respect to moral Duty.

Thirdly, That all humane Bodies, in the present State of Mankind, are not of equal Vigour, nor all their Members and Organs of the same hability, is a certain Truth: Because it is obvious to common Observation. And therefore, tho' we should suppose, that the Souls of all Men are naturally endued with the same Powers, in an absolute and intire Equality; (which it is not easy

easy to demonstrate) yet considering the mutual dependance and influence, which the Soul and Body have upon each other, in all their Operations, as they are united in every individual; such a mutual Influence and Dependance, as every Man is conscious of, by finding his own Mind sometimes in a greater, sometimes in a lesser Capacity to exert it self, accordingly as the Body is better or worse disposed. I say, considering the unquestionable Evidence of this; it doth plainly follow from it, That from this Cause, as well as the Reasons before mentioned, there must be a great Variety in the respective Degrees of this Light of common Reason, in the present State of Mankind: And that all Men do not share of it, in equal Proportion.

And I shall only need to mention further, one Consideration, that is to be more especially regarded; being of great Weight in our present Enquiry, *viz.*

Fourthly, That besides the Prejudices of a bad Education, and the Influence of bad Example; which do exceedingly corrupt the humane Mind; introducing such vitious Biasses as do lamentably obstruct the Light of Reason; or rather like a false Perspective, give it an unfaithful Representation of what relates to Virtue and Vice. I say besides these, the sensual Appetites that are in the present natural Constitution of every individual; and are incessantly
opera-

operating, pushing, enticing, turning aside, or terrifying, the rational Mind ; do unexpressibly affect it, by a vitious Turn, with regard to moral Duty. These sensual Appetites disturb, disorder, and inflame the Passions : And the boiling Rage of these, intoxicates the Mind, blinds the Understanding, and corrupts the Will : Insomuch that the Reason which ought to govern the Passions, is often not only over-powered by them ; but captivated and enslaved. And withal, the more those sensual Appetites, and these disordered Passions, are indulged and gratified ; the more they rage : And by frequent Victory over the Reason, they introduce vitious Habits upon the Man. Of Lust, Covetousness, Pride, Ambition, Anger, Envy, Malice and Revenge, or of one, or more of these and other vitious Habits ; if not a Neglect and Contempt of God, and the whole Train of immoral Guilt ; yet at least the reigning Power and Dominion of some more darling Lust, and predominant Vice, or Vices. And these do still tend more and more, to depress and darken the Understanding, and alienate the Will, from all the Bonds of moral Duty.

And tho' this Gentleman despiseth the Revelation, that assures us of it ; yet he must know there may be, and we know there are, malevolent, subtile, active, restless, and industrious, apostate Spirits, still insinuating their Suggestions into the corrupted

rupted Mind ; and artfully insidious, improving every Advantage they may catch, to debauch and destroy ; who are well acquainted with all our Weaknesses, and with the State and Tendency of our sensual Appetites, and unruly Passions ; skilful to adapt their Temptations to all our Senses, to time, and place, and every Circumstance that may ensnare, and to exert their Activity upon our Blood and animal Spirits. And if this Consideration is added to what is before represented ; it must upon the whole convince, that to the adhering duly to moral Duty, in this frail Life, even they, who have the most strenuous Exercise of common Reason, have need of more than humane Help.

But we need not, at present, insist with this Author, upon this Topic, relating to malevolent Spirits ; tho' even abstracting from Revelation, it is highly probable by Facts, ancient and modern, that are well attested. And withal the very possibility of its truth, is of no small weight in the present Question. We need not, I say, insist on this.

For, all that I have before briefly hinted, in the view we have taken of this Light of common Reason, doth carry in it self, such convincing Evidence, as cannot be resisted, by any, who are but in a small degree, acquainted with the present State of Mankind, and do consult the impartial Testimony of

their own Breast. Indeed, if it were not, that He against whom we dispute, is used to grant, and refuse, the same things, as may best serve his turn; and sometimes to reason in direct opposition to what he has granted; it had been needless to say so much upon this Point, of the Weaknesses, and Disadvantages which the *Light of common Reason* laboureth under in the present State of Mankind. For, how much soever he is pleased, at some times, to extol the Powers of common Reason; yea so far, as to be *absolutely, perfectly, sufficient*; to teach Men, *every Man*, all the Principles of natural Religion, and the whole of their Duty; so far as they are concerned to know, believe, and practise; tho' they be ever so much, corrupted, darkened, and ignorant: Yet at other times, he laments the Corruption, Ignorance, and Superstition that abounds; and he will not so much as allow that this same *Light of common Reason* in the Bulk of Mankind, is capable to examine and judge of the moral Proof of external Revelation; tho' it doth not consist of speculative abstracted Ideas, or subtile Reasoning; but is drawn from such Facts, as doth render the moral Evidence sufficiently plain to the meanest Capacities,

§ 3. But notwithstanding all we have said on the one hand, of the great Disadvantages which the *Light of common Reason* labours under, in the present State of Mankind.

kind. Yet on the other hand, we are far from refusing this *Light of Reason* its due. We cheartfully own it, to be a most excellent and distinguishing Gift of the great Creator, and the highest Mark of our natural Dignity above the Beasts that perish. A Gift of great Advantage and Benefit: A Priviledge for which Man can never enough adore and magnify his Maker. We own it to be a way by which God doth reveal many Truths, and the Knowledge both of Himself; and of his Will, in many Instances of great Importance, that ought to be regarded with a most heedful Attention, and a sincere Obedience; so far as the Knowledge of himself; and of his Will, is in this way manifested. Yea we own that, naturally, it is only by the Faculty and Light of common Reason, that we can examine and perceive the Differences of Truth and Falshood: And that it is by this we are to try and examine any pretended external Revelation of the Divine Will. We own that when our Ideas are clear, and the perception of them distinct, and their Agreement or Disagreement evident, we can never be deceived: Because this is the Test of Truth and Falshood, which the God of infinite Veracity hath formed and planted in our Nature.

We further own that there are Principles of immutable eternal Truth derived as Emanations from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, to which the assent of the humane

Mind is necessarily determined, as soon as they are plainly presented to it. And likewise, that if God is pleased to impart and reveal his Mind to Man, it must certainly be in a way suitable to his humane Nature, as endowed with the Faculty of Reason, *i. e.* by the convincing of his Understanding, and the perswading of his Will. Yea we further own, That nothing can be obtruded upon the assent of the humane Mind, as Truth, or Credible, that carries evidently in it, a Contradiction to those clear and distinct Ideas, or Principles of eternal Truth, to which the rational Mind cannot forbear its Assent. Revelation doth never oblige to abandon Reason and common Sense; on the contrary nothing can be Revelation that contradicts true Reason. It supplies the Defects of Reason, but yet in things that are plain to Reason, it often appeals to it. We are far therefore from disputing against the Evidence of Reason. For we well know that the very attempting to do so, would be a Contradiction to it self, by an Appeal to its Decision: And that they who pretend to reason against the Evidence and natural Principles of Reason, must reason by themselves; because it is impossible for Mankind to reason with them.

§ 4. But yet after all, we cannot resist the Conviction of the Truth which the view we have taken of it, as it is before represented, doth plainly render evident; *viz.*
That

That in the present State of Mankind, it is still the Reason of a weak impotent Creature, wrestling under all the Disadvantages and Encumbrances we have mentioned. And therefore very unfit to be our only Guide. And Reason it self, in this Case, doth plead the need of more Light and more Help, to enable Men, duly to know and discharge their moral Duty, and thereby advance the Perfection of their Nature.

The chief thing pleaded by the Adversaries of Revelation, is the high Attainments of some of those, who had no other Guide but this Light of common Reason; and from this they would infer its perfect Sufficiency.

In Answer to this. Altho' there have indeed been some distinguished Minds of great Penetration, who by the mere Light of natural Reason, have not only attained to vast Improvement in all the Sciences; but also sometimes raised the Doctrine of Morality to an admirable Pitch. Yet, *First*, Have any of those celebrated Men exhausted so much as one Science? Have they not still left place to the Labour, Improvements, and Discoveries of those that have come after them, even to our present Age? And shall not this Age leave it also to the Improvements of after Generations? And to imagine that the moral Science is more easily attainable by the mere Light of Nature, must needs be a foolish and gross Mistake. And

it doth need no other Confutation than this; that there have been so few of them who have advanced the Rules of moral Life to any great Proficiency: That those few have not only differed, one from another, in Matters of high Importance; but all and sundry of them have been more or less intangled in gross Errors, and never one of them have afforded, or pretended to afford a perfect System of Morality.

Is it not easy for every Christian, even of small Improvement, that hath been conversant in their most famous Writings, to observe the Defects and staring Blemishes in the best of them? Yea tho' all the moral Doctrine of their Philosophers, Orators, and Poets, were compared together, allowing the most beautiful Emendations of every one of them, for correcting the Escapes and Blunders of all the rest: Yet every half-learned Christian, that is but tollerably well instructed, in the plain Rules of moral Duty, obvious to common Capacity, which the *New Testament* alone doth afford, is easily able by a far greater Accomplishment, to out-strip them all. His moral System will exceed theirs more than their Eloquence and refined turns of Wit, doth his Simplicity. And withal, it is not very difficult to observe and trace, in the most refined of them; the Marks and Indications of what they have learned from such Divine Revelation, as
was

was anterior to their times, if this did consist with the Brevity I propose.

Like as we find in our own Days by the Attempts of some ingenious Men, who have laboured to raise and improve the System of moral Duty from the Principles of natural Light; that they have indeed far exceeded the Performances of those who enjoy'd little more than the Light of Nature. For when the Meridian Light of the Gospel hath displayed every Article of moral Truth, and Duty, to Perfection; it is far more easy to reduce all to the Principles of right Reason, and to illustrate their beautiful Agreement and concordant Harmony, than it is to make the first Discovery. And how much soever those learned and laboured Performances may deserve to be applauded; as they minister a comfortable Delight to all sincere Christians, by pointing to the concordant Harmony of our Holy Religion, with the Law of Nature; yet it is a most perverse Wickedness and Abuse, to improve this as an Argument in Prejudice of the Divine Revelation, Especially seeing at the greatest height to which the very best of their Performances have yet been raised; it is easy for one of far less Learning and Penetration, to observe Defects, and to perceive how far even Mr. *Woollaston* hath fallen short of his Aim.

Secondly. It well deserves a special Notice. That the Number of those who have

acquired any lucky and great Attainments in the moral Philosophy by the Light of common Reason, is but small. What a pitiful Proportion doth this bear to the common Bulk of Mankind? And yet upon the Principles of our opposite Author, "the Light of common Reason under all the Disadvantages" mentioned, must be absolutely and perfectly "sufficient, as a perfect Rule of moral Duty, to every Man (to every illiterate Individual, as well as to the most refined Philosopher) yea plainly and perfectly to teach and direct him, with respect to every thing that he is concerned, either to know, believe, profess, or practice." And withal it is still further to be noticed; that upon this Author's Principles, every individual of this illiterate Bulk of Mankind, is capable of himself, by this mere Light of common Reason, in the Use and Exercise of his own natural Faculties, to know, believe, profess, and practise, with respect to every thing he is concerned in; altho' there had never been a moral Philosopher in the World, to teach and improve the natural System of Morality, *i. e.* He must himself be perfectly Master of the moral System he is concerned in, for advancing the perfection of his Nature; and of sufficient Skill and Knowledge how to use and apply it, upon all the emergent Occasions of moral Duty. For the Discoveries and Improvements of the moral System which the learned have made,

made, are merely accidental to him. And consequently it cannot be necessary that they should ever come to his Knowledge. As those Improvements might have never been, so he may have never heard of them.

Now is not a poor illiterate Man in this State of his weak, unassisted Nature, in a fine Situation, for understanding and discovering, the nature of Things, and the relation they stand in to God, and to one another by the mere Light of his common Reason? Let common Sense judge of what he is likely to atchieve in this hopeful Condition. One would think that this needs no other Confutation, but merely to represent and rehearse it. Can it be possible, that they who teach and publish this, do really themselves believe it? and is it not strange that these should be the Men who cannot believe Miracles and Mysteries? Especially if our poor illiterate Man is further considered, as under the Biass and Influence of sensual Appetites and disordered Passions; yea and vicious Habits too: Tho' there were no apostate Spirits to practise upon him, to raise a Mist before his Understanding, and to tempt and allure his Will, nor a World of Temptation, and bad Example, round about him. And yet as it is with the poor illiterate Individual, so it is with the common Bulk of Mankind.

Thirdly. According to this Gentleman's Scheme; No Instruction, even of the most refined

refined Philosophers can be useful to any such. For *First*. According to him and his wild manner of Reasoning, their Light of common Reason is sufficient, perfectly sufficient; and therefore all other help is useless, superfluous, and needless. *Secondly*. Their interposal with all their Wisdom, sage Rules and Precepts, is the same with Priestcraft. They are Politicians, cunning Men, and may have a Design upon them; the more Learning and the more Logic or Wit, still the more dangerous. They must therefore be necessarily left, how ignorant soever, to use their own natural Faculties, and make shift to judge for themselves. There is no Remedy, for tho' the help of some Instruction should be admitted, even against the Author's Scheme. Yet *Thirdly*. Still it must be by conveying into their Minds those Reasons that have convinced their Teachers themselves. For it is to this purpose he doth reason, *Chap. 11. Page 190*. And indeed it is the most solid Reasoning in all his large Book; being copied from Mr. *Woollaston's* Religion of Nature delineated. I shall here transcribe the whole Passage, because I have special use for it hereafter. In short, "says he, no Man can any more discern the Objects of his own Understanding, and their Relations, by the Faculties of another, than he can see with another Man's Eyes; or than one Ship can be guided with the Helm of another."

“ther. And therefore he who demands a
“Man’s Assent to any thing, without con-
“veighing into his Mind such Reasons as
“may produce a Sense of the Truth of it,
“erects a Tyranny over his Understanding,
“and demands an impossible Tribute. No
“Opinion tho’ ever so certain to one Man,
“can be infused into another, as certain ;
“by any Method, but by opening his Un-
“derstanding, so as he may find the reason-
“ableness of it, in his own Mind. And
“consequently, the only Criterion by which
“he tries his own Reasoning, must be the
“internal Evidence he has already of cer-
“tain Truths, and the agreeableness of the
“Inferences to them.”

This Reasoning, I say, is indeed solid, who-
ever be the Instructors: Whether Philoso-
phers, or Priests, or both of them. And
truly this is all the Guard, under God, that
Mankind have to prevent their being im-
posed on by Priest-craft ; and it is a suffi-
cient Guard ; if Men are not so foolish as to
give it up to the gross Imposture of pretend-
ed Infallibility. Insomuch that under the
Instruction of a Church which recommends
this Guard, and urgeth to *prove all things,*
and *hold fast that which is good* ; a Church
that hath detected, and doth renounce this
Imposture, the cry of Priest-craft by this
Gentleman and his Friends, is nothing (if
I may be allowed to use the Words that
are familiar to him) but Reverie and Non-
sense,

sense. However if God himself doth vouchsafe to be the Instructor by interposing his own infallible Authority ; that is never to be disputed, if this Interposal is duly manifested. For where that becomes the Case, although we cannot fully comprehend the Nature and Reason of Things ; yet if our Reason is convinced that it is his Testimony and doth not imply a Contradiction ; we are bound to submit to that infallible Testimony of the God of Truth.

However, upon this Gentleman's Scheme, the illiterate Multitude are still left in an inextricable Labyrinth ; because as shall be made evident hereafter, there are sundry Doctrines of the highest Consequence, as being the chief Springs and essential Grounds of moral Duty, and whereof the Reality and Truth may be demonstrated by the Philosophy of the learned : And yet it is only in the use of Metaphysical Reasoning, and of such abstracted Ideas, and manner of Deduction, as cannot be conveyed into the Minds of one among an hundred of those Illiterate. And if this is the real Truth, as shall hereafter be rendred obvious ; then all the Instruction of the most refined Philosophy will be of small avail to the Multitude of Mankind, unless the interposal of Divine Revelation is admitted.

And now, to all I have before suggested, relating to the Encumbrances and Disadvantages under which the Light of common Reason

Reason doth labour, in the present State of Mankind ; I shall only further add, for taking off all shadow of Force from what is before mentioned near the beginning of this third §. as the chief thing pleaded by the Adversaries of Revelation.

Fourthly. That so universal, and so gross is the Corruption of Mankind ; so universal is the sway of sensual Appetites, and the disorder and disturbance of the unruly Passions : So sensible is the Influence of all this upon the humane Mind by weakening, obscuring, and imposing on the Understanding, and perverting of the Will and its Affections : That altho' all are not alike sunk into Sensuality and Vice. Yet there are none alive who are not, more, or less, conscious of this universal Malady. The more refined that any of the ancient famous Philosophers have been, especially the Masters of moral Science ; the more have they lamented this ; groaning and bewailing, under the Conviction they had of the moral Disorders of the humane Nature ; that all the Faculties were enfeebled and perverted ; the Understanding weak and narrow, the Will corrupted, and all the Passions and Affections out of order. And hence they often mention the Diseases of the Soul, and the natural Tendency to licentious Vice, and Averſation from the strictness and severity of Virtue. And affirm the Necessity of Divine Help to the recovery of the Soul,
and

and the attainment of Wisdom and Virtue.

Some Instances of this are famous. Of *Plato* in his *Alcibiades*, where he takes Pains to convince that noble *Athenian*, of humane Ignorance and Infirmary, and the Necessity of a Director from Heaven, to teach him to pray for Divine Assistance in order to the Improvement and Perfection of our Nature. Of *Pythagoras* who prescribes the same Application to the Deity by Prayer under the sense of humane Weakness. And in the close of *Simplicius's* Commentary upon *Epictetus*, we have a celebrated Prayer for *Help to conquer the Corruption of the Flesh, to correct the Infirmities of our Reason, to remove all Darknes from the Eyes of the Soul, by the Light of Divine Truth.*

Altho' these and others of the more refined Philosophers, of the Pagan World; wanted the Divine Revelation by which we are instructed in the fall of Man, and the Necessity of Divine Grace; yet they were sensible of the universal Corruption of our Nature, and the need we have of Divine Supernatural Help. Withal, our Gentleman will own they were as good Philosophers as himself; that they enjoyed a more eminent share of the Light of common Reason, than the rest of Mankind, and had made great and laudable Improvement of it.

But we need not their Authority to prove a Truth that is so palpably confirmed by
the

the sensible Feeling and Experience of the race of Mankind. Whatever is the Cause or first Origine of this Misery, the Pretenders to Free-thinking should not pretend to put out our Eyes, or to refuse us some share of common Sense. And 'tis certain there is no Man on Earth that is in the least degree acquainted with his own Mind, learned or unlearned, who can be insensible of the Defects of his own Understanding, the Perversity of his Will, the Disorder and Rebellion of his unruly Passions and Affections; and the Difficulties that do arise therefrom, in avoiding the Irregularities of Life, and in an uniform and steady pursuit of Virtue and moral Duty.

Now there is no other way of proving this, but by an Appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, *i. e.* that we and all Mankind are conscious of it. But then at the same time, this is likewise all the Proof we can have, that there is any such thing as the Light of common Reason it self: Unless it be by the observable Effects of it. And the observable woful Effects of this universal Corruption of our Nature, are no less palpable and conspicuous, than the very Effects of our common Reason. All Mankind are no less sensible and conscious of the one, than of the other: And is it possible to have this Conviction, and not be sensible of the need of Divine Help? And when the merciful God affords this Help, is it not strange

to find it rejected and despised? The boundless Pity of our great Creator hath moved him to afford it; not only by external Revelation; but also by the internal Aid and Influence of the Holy Spirit, without which there is no external Help that could avail or profit us; for repairing the Decays of our weak Understanding, correcting the Depravation of our corrupt Will, and bridling and reducing into Order our unruly and rebellious Passions and Affections, and thereby advancing the Perfection of our Nature.

Of the first of these Vouchsafements, viz. by external Revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures, is the present Controversy. In the first *Chapter* there is a short Sketch of the moral Evidence and Proof that this Revelation is from God. In the second *Chapter* I have made Remarks upon the Gentleman's grand Argument in the general. And in this *Chapter* I have taken a more particular View of the Light of common Reason, as it ought to be considered in the present State of Mankind: Allowing the great Excellency, Benefit and Advantage of it. Allowing it not only to be one way by which God doth reveal many Truths, and the Knowledge of himself and of his Will in many Instances and Degrees of great Importance. But also to be the only natural Faculty we have for examining and discerning Truth and Falshood. And further too, that if God doth himself impart his
Mind

Mind to Man, it must necessarily be in a way that is suitable to humane Nature, *i. e.* by convincing his Understanding, and persuading his Will. Yea allowing that nothing can be obtruded upon the Assent of the humane Mind, as Truth or Credible, that carries evidently in it a Contradiction to those clear and distinct Ideas, and self-evident Principles of eternal immutable Truth, to which the rational Mind cannot forbear its assent.

But giving all these Allowances and Concessions that can in common Reason, be demanded; yet the Representation I have also briefly given of the Encumbrances and Disadvantages under which the Light of common Reason doth labour, in the present weak and corrupted State of Mankind; and as it is confirmed, more or less, by the common and conscious Sense of every Individual; is such as may abundantly evince that some Divine Help is needful. However it is my present Undertaking only to evince that it may at least be useful and expedient. And that it ought to be wished by all who have this conscious Sense of those Disadvantages and Encumbrances; and own that there is any such thing as moral Duty. Reserving the more full proof of the necessity thereof to the following *Chapters*.

And that the great Usefulness and Benefit of the Revelation we enjoy, may be the

more evident, I shall here briefly offer three Observations.

First. That there is nothing relating to moral Duty, that is not taught and pointed to, in the Holy Scriptures: And this so plainly, as to be obvious to the meanest Capacity; without need of any long, laborious, Deduction by a Series of Reasoning, or the least Recourse to any abstracted Ideas, their Connexion and Agreement, or the *Mediums* that may unite them. * And withal,

* This hath been formerly owned and confessed by the greatest Adversaries of Revelation; and they have never pretended, that there is any Article of Morality that is not to be often found in the Holy Scriptures: Until of late, that the contrary hath been suggested, with regard to two Articles, *viz.* *Friendship* and the *Love of ones Country*. And therefore I think I ought here to shew briefly, How little Reason there is for this Pretence.

This Objection seems to have been partly occasioned by an Observation of Bp. *Jer. Taylor*, in his Treatise of Friendship, *viz.* That the Word Friendship is only once mentioned in the *New Testament*: And this, where the *Friendship of the World*, is said to be *Enmity with God*. The Earl of Shaftesbury is the first I have heard of, that hath urged this Objection. *Characteristicks*, vol. 1. pag. 98, &c. 4 Edit. And his Annotator (if this is not also himself) takes notice of the Passage in Bp. *Taylor*, The Defence of the perfection of the Holy Scriptures, against this Objection, which I humbly offer with all due regard to that distinguished, noble and bright Author, is as followeth, *viz.*

First. Let these two Articles of *Friendship*, and *Love to ones Country*, and all that relates to them; be examined in the nicest manner: And whatever more is in them, than is comprehended in the universal Charity and Love to Mankind, required by the Christian Revelation is either expressly Christian Morality; or is not absolutely and strictly speaking, any matter of moral Duty: But only such natural Benefit, Conveniency, and Delight, as is not forbidden by any Law; and therefore allowed to Mankind. Indulgence and Allowance, is no Command; by any Law, either of Nature, or Revelation

seeing

seeing on the other hand, at least some of the Doctrines and Principles from which the

tion. And withal, the extent of our Capacity to do good Offices, is so very small ; that tho' we are obliged to wish the good of all, to rejoice in it, and to have a Sympathy in what doth happen, Good or Evil, unto all ; yet our good Offices can only reach to a few. And therefore (if the Law of universal Charity is not thereby violated) as we are commanded, chiefly to apply them, to some select Relations ; by Nature, and Grace, in the first place ; and in the next place to every Neighbour ; so there is, for our Comfort, and Delight, as well as common Advantage and Conveniency, an allowance to exert those good Offices, also in a distinguishing manner, to a Friend, and to our Countrymen.

But then, as the relation of Countrymen united in one Society, doth imply at least a Tacit Compact of mutual Love, Aid, and Care of one another, for their common Good, Safety, and Prosperity ; if in this Sense considered : Then indeed the yielding of this particular Love, Aid, and Care of our Countrymen, in the Virtue of this Compact, Tacit, or Express ; becomes moral Duty. And so falls under all those Laws natural and revealed, that require sincere Fidelity in the Performance of Compact : I suppose it will be owned that the Scriptures are not defective here. Again, if the Love of our Country is considered as a greatful Return for the Benefits thereby afforded : Then, so far as the Christian Law doth expressly bind to Gratitude ; neither can it be said, to be defective here. I suppose these two things I have mentioned, together with the Principle of Self preservation, and the lawful pursuit of our own private Interest and Safety, included in that of the Society ; do comprehend all the rational and religious Ties of Love and Duty to our Country, as it is distinguished from other Countries. If Christians, as such, are to render unto all, their due ; who can imagine their Country is here excluded ? If private Fidelity, and private Gratitude, are Christian Duties ; How can the violation of publick Faith, and Gratitude to the Publick, be consistent with Christianity ?

And in like manner. If Friendship is duly considered, wherever it is contracted ; it doth likewise imply, at least a Tacit, if not an express Compact, of a more special Love, Aid, Counsel, and strict Adherence, with a communication and mutual partaking of Joys and Griefs. And if the faithful Performance of all lawful Compact, is expressly required by

Precepts of moral Duty are inferred by *the Light of common Reason*, and some of the

Christianity; who can imagine that it is, in this Case, excluded? Are not Falshood, Unfaithfulness, Deceit, Treachery, Dissimulation, Ingratitude, and all the opposites of a true and virtuous Friendship, that can be named; all of them expressly against the Christian Law? And if the Word Friendship is not in the *New Testament*, yet is it not enough, that all the real Duties relating to it are abundantly there?

Tho' what is said may well serve to take off the Objection: Yet to silence it for ever: Let the Scriptures speak for themselves, that it may be further evident; how little Reason there hath been, for starting this Objection; especially with an Air of bantering Triumph, and insulting Contempt of Holy Scriptures.

And *First*. As to Friendship, private Friendship, of which the noble Earl, or his Annotator, perhaps personated by himself, sayeth, "No fair Reader can here suppose is meant, that common Benevolence and Charity, which every Christian is obliged to shew towards all Men, and in particular towards his Fellow Christians, his Neighbour, Brother, and Kindred of what ever degree; but that peculiar Relation, which is formed by Consent and Harmony of Minds, by mutual Esteem, and reciprocal Tenderness and Affection; and which we emphatically call a Friendship." I say, as to this special Friendship, thus distinguished: Can it be fairly said, that this is not often pointed to, in the Holy Scriptures, with such Marks of a special Divine Regard, as ought, in all Duty, to recommend it unto Mankind, and bind to a strict and sincere Performance of the Duties that relate to it; and to give a Detestation of violating them?

And first, in the *Old Testament*, so far as that is a part of the Rule, and Law of Christians. When it is said (*Exod. 3. 11.*) *God spake to Moses as a Man to his Friend*. As this was an Honour to *Moses*; so Friendship is thereby plainly dignified. And in the same manner, is not this Relation of Friendship dignified by its being entered into by God himself, as when *Abraham* is called the Friend of God? (*2 Chr. 20. 7.*) This is also referred unto (*Jam. 2. 3.*) as well as (*Isa. 41. 8.*) And who can observe the Gradation used by *Moses* (*Dent. 13. 6.*) without observing also, the Approbation, and Honour, that is there given to Friendship? *If thy Brother, the Son of thy Mother, or thy Son, or thy Daughter, or the Wife of thy Bosom, or thy Friend which is as thine own Soul.* When the Reason.

Reasoning that infers them to be moral Duty, do require a recourse unto such ab-

noble Author was pleased to mention the Friendship of *Jonathan* and *David*, He might also have taken Notice of *Hushai*, *David's Friend*. (2 Sam. 15. 37. and 16. Chap. 16. 17.) Is not friendly Duty pointed to, by holy *Job*? (Chap 6. 14.) *To him that is afflicted, Pity should be shewed from his Friend, and (ver 37.) Ye dig a Pit for your Friend, is spoken as a hainous Aggravation. The same Aggravation is again (Zech. 13. 6.) Wounded in the House of my Friends. And in like manner, (Jer. 20. 10.) And we have the same Aggravation again, (Psalm 41. 9.) Yea my own familiar Friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my Bread, hath lift up his Heel against me. Just so, (Job. 17. 5.) That speaketh Flattery to his Friend. And again (Micah. 7. 5.) among other Aggravations of the corrupted State of the People, such as, the Son dishonouring the Father, and the Daughter rising up against the Mother; this is reckoned one, That a Friend was not to be trusted. And is not the pleading of *Job*, Emphatical? (Job. 19. 21.) Have Pity on me, have Pity on me, O ye my Friends; for the Hand of God hath touched me. (See the two foregoing Verses.)*

One would think, that this noble Author had no need to complain; that the Jews, as well as Heathens, were left to their Philosophy, to be instructed, in the sublime Part of Virtue, relating to Friendship. If he had look'd into the Book of Proverbs, a part of their Canon; a Book which surely so bright a Genius did not think unworthy his Perusal; his Lordship might have found in this very Book that there is not only what is sufficient to recommend what ever is sublime in Friendship; but also express Precept and Rules of Duty relating to it. Particularly, in Chapters 16, 17, 22, and 27, viz. *A Friend loveth at all times. A Man that hath Friends, must shew himself friendly. And there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a Brother. Faithful are the Wounds of a Friend. Thine own Friend, and thy Father's Friend, forget not. Ointment and Perfume rejoice the Heart, so doth the Sweetness of a Man's Friend, by hearty Counsel. Iron sharpeneth Iron; so a Man sharpeneth the Countenance of his Friend. A Whisperer separateth Friends. He that repeateth a Matter, separateth very Friends. Make no Friendship with an angry Man.*

What I have cited from the Old Testament, is enough to satisfy every impartial Mind, That Revelation hath not been

fract Ideas, and the accurate observing of their Agreement, and of the proper *Mediums*

wanting to afford sufficiently upon this Article of Friendship. And the *Old Testament*, being part of the Canon of Christians, is to them of the same Authority with the *New* in every thing that relates to moral Duty. Yet further,

Secondly. In the *New Testament*: There is not one Circumstance, that can be called Dutiful, or Virtuous, in one Friend to another; that is not incorporated into the very Constitution of Christianity: That is not often, and expressly enjoined to Christians. And as I before mentioned, are not Falshood, Unfaithfulness, Deceit, Treachery, Dissimulation, Ingratitude, and all the Opposites of a true and virtuous Friendship; all of them, expressly against the Christian Law? Can more be desired? Yet there is more. Is not Friendship, even in the greatest and most exalted height of it, not only expressed, but also pointed unto, by our Saviour himself, with an Approbation, that is more than insinuated; inasmuch as Himself was to copy out after it, as the common Friend of Mankind. Yea being then with his Disciples alone, He expressly recommends to them, the same mutual height of Friendship with one another. (*St. John 15. 12, 13.*) *This is my Commandment that ye love one another; as I have loved you. Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend.* For tho' the Gospel enjoys an universal Charity; yet this Expression of Love, which is here represented, as the very height of Friendship, viz. the laying down of Life; is no where in the Gospel, enjoined with regard to the love of every individual. However such special and mutual Friendship, even in this height of it, among the Disciples, to whom alone he here speaks, seems to be plainly recommended, with regard to one another. And altho' some may perhaps think, the confining what is here particularly recommended by our Saviour, to the Disciples then present, is a singular Thought, and perhaps may not be determined to join in it, by the Reason I have assigned: Yet that there is here an Approbation of a virtuous Friendship, even in the most exalted height of it, cannot admit of any Dispute, When the noble Author, or his Annotator, was Criticizing on the Words of *St. Paul (Rom. 5. 7.) Scarcely for a righteous Man — Yet peradventure for a good Man some would even dare to die:* If an Eye had been turned into this Passage from the Mouth of our Saviour, there is no *Peradventure*, in it. And yet such is the Influence of Self-preservation,

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to be used, for making a due and rational Inference, as is at least difficult, if not im-

that even among the polite *Romans* to whom the Apostle was writing; it would not have been easy to find such height of Friendship. And therefore the Peradventure might have passed without any severity of Remark, or insinuated Inference. His Lordship was a Personage of extraordinary Merit, yet if he had one Friend of that exalted Pitch, there is still a *Peradventure* there are few so stated.

But it is of special Importance, in this Question; that *Jesus Christ* our Saviour, who took upon him our human Nature, to become not only a Master or Teacher, and our great Propitiation; but also our Patern and Example; did not only, while he lived on Earth, exert an universal Love to Mankind; but also was himself a shining Example of the more particular and special virtuous Friendship. He who layed down his Life for all Mankind, did yet, withal exemplify the more special Attachment of the particular Friendship. And that not only with regard to *Lazarus* his Friend, and *Martha* and *Mary*, the Sisters of the said *Lazarus*, as appears eminently in the History of the Gospels, and more particularly in *St. John* 11. but also in the most distinguishing manner, of a constant and habitual special Friendship with regard to *St. John* the beloved Disciple, his bosom Friend, who usually *leaned upon his Breast*, with all the Privileges of the most intimate Friendship. The special mutual Friendship wherewith he entertained all the Disciples, in a very high degree, was eminent in many Instances recorded. And is there not a special Dignity ascribed to the Relation of a Friend, in these Words of our Lord to them all (*John* 11. 15.) *Henceforth I call you not Servants — but I have called you Friends?* But the yet more intimate Friendship with *St. John*; tho' there is some resemblance of it, in the Accounts we have of the Friendship of *Socrates* and *Antisthenes*, *Plato* and *Dion*; yet it doth surpass not only those; but may vie with all the poetical Flights of their fictitious celebrated Friendships. On his side all the Disciples, had communicated unto them eminent Privileges of Friendship, and for them all, he layed down his Life. And the Friendship was reciprocal, for on their side, tho' once in a sudden Surprise, their Weakness was such, that they all forsook him, and fled, yet they were afterward deliberately ready to lay down their Lives for his Sake. (The singular Case of *Judas* is no just Objection here) Yet among them all, there was one most special Favourite,

possible for the illiterate Multitude. All this deliberately weighed, renders it clear

habitually communicating in the highest degrees of the most distinguished intimate Friendship. If there was a Question which the other Disciples would not adventure to propose to their Lord; yea even *St. Peter*, eminent among them; a beckning with the Hand to this more special Favourite, could soon obtain the desired Information. This was the beloved Disciple unto whom (when dying on the Cross) he bequeathed the Tuition of the blessed Virgin his Mother. My loss is, that I can only use dry Reasoning here. But if one of such matchless Eloquence and a yet stronger Genius, as did adorn the Earl of *Shaftesbury*, was to manage my Argument; with how many elegant Turns of Wit and Beauties of Speech, might this unparalleled Example of Friendship, be set off? And it is here to be minded, that the Example of our Saviour, is a directing Rule to Christians, in every thing that relates to moral Duty. They are to learn of him, and to follow him, and to walk as he hath walked. So that Precept is not here omitted. Now if all that is to be found in the ancient Philosophers, Orators, Poets, and Historians, with regard to Friendship, were collected together, it would make but a sorry Figure, if compared with what hath been represented, as afforded in the holy Scriptures. Let all the World then, judge here, if there was any Ground for starting this Objection. And how little Reason had the noble Author who moves it, to urge the want of any Sanction of Reward and Punishment, upon the observing, or violating, the Duties and Rules relating to Friendship? Doth not this Sanction universally attend, every due Obedience, and every criminal Violation, in all the Branches of moral Duty recommended in the holy Scriptures? By this time, my impartial Reader, may perhaps think, I have enlarged too much, and needlessly, in a Case so plainly evident. But the Boasting and Triumph that hath been raised upon this groundless Objection, constrains me to it. And I shall now only briefly touch the other Branch of the Objection, relating

Secondly, To the Love of ones Country. Now it is remarkable, that a partiality towards the *Jewish* Nation, is the strongest Objection against Christianity; upon which the Advocates of Infidelity, have raised the Hue and Cry. And was not *Judea* the native Country of our Saviour? And yet here, the Religion which he hath instituted, is objected against, and upbraided as defective in this very Article of

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and evident, to a Demonstration, That this external Revelation may be useful.

Love due to ones Country. This is nimble (if it were not Contradictory) beyond all the Arts of Gladiators. In common Justice, as well as Modesty, they should take their choice; either to plead this Defect, and drop the other Objection: Or else to drop this, and plead only the other, that is inconsistent with it. Such change of Shapes doth not commonly pass for fair dealing. However, so it is, that we have to do with Adversaries, who need more than Grains of Allowance. The grand Objection of a Partiality towards the *Jewish Nation*, is to be hereafter examined and answered in the following Chapters. We are now upon the Love of ones Country.

And indeed, as the wrong Notion of this, was sanguinely pursued, by the ancient *Greek and Roman Republicks*; to the invading the Rights of the rest of Mankind, in their Liberties, Properties, and Lives: It is to the glory of Christianity, that it cannot consist with this; that this is a plain Contradiction to it. But whatever there is, in the Love of ones Country, that can consist with common Justice, and the Law of universal Charity; it hath been already observed; That this is all established, on Compact, Tacit, or Expresed; and Gratitude for Benefits received, together with the Principle of Self-preservation, and the lawful Pursuit of our own private Interest and Safety, included in that of our Country. And enough was then said to silence the Objection. And now yet further.

So far as the Example of our Saviour himself, which is a Law to Christians, can have weight, to recommend the Love of ones Country; this hath not been wanting likewise. It seems, the Elders of the *Jews*, his own Countrymen were well convinced of this; when they pleaded this Argument with him (St. Luke 7. 5.) for the *Centurian* whose Servant was Sick. *For he loveth our Nation, and he hath built us a Synagogue.* Nay are not the same Advocates for Infidelity ready to find fault with him as partial to his own Country in his Answer to the *Syrophœnician Woman* (Mark 7. 27.) *Let the Children first be filled; For it is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and give it unto Dogs.* Who can doubt of the exuberant warmth of his Love to his Country, that shall read those pathetick Words, in which it did vent it self, on the sad Prospect of his Countries impending ruin? (Luke 19. 41, 42.) *And when he was come near, he beheld the City,*

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A *Second* Observation is this, That besides the needful help it doth otherwise afford,

and wept over it, saying; *If thou hadst known even thou at least in this thy Day, the things which belong unto thy Peace!* (Mat. 23. 37.) *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not? And being about to ascend into Heaven, did he not command his Disciples to preach the Gospel first at Jerusalem, and throughout the Cities of Judah.*

And St. Paul, who says, *Be ye Followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*; tho' he was the Apostle of the Gentiles by special Commission; yet in all Places to which he travelled to spread the Gospel; the first offer he made was still to the *Jews*. And to what height the love of his Country did transport him, is manifest, as he expresseth it himself, by his *Heart's desire and Prayer to God for them*; but more especially (Rom. 9.) *I say the truth in Christ, I lye not, my Conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost, That I have great Heaviness and continual Sorrow in my Heart. For I could wish, that my self were accursed from Christ, for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the Flesh. i. e. For their sake, he was willing to suffer the being so abandoned by Christ, as Christ was by his heavenly Father, for the sake of Mankind.*

And much like unto this, is that Expression of *Moses* (Exod. 32.) *Interceding for his Countrymen, even when God had offered to make of himself a great Nation, tho' they should be destroy'd. Yet now, if thou wilt; forgive their Sin: And if not, blot me I pray thee, out of thy Book which thou hast written*; i. e. To have his own Title to the promised Land erased. The same *Moses*, who in his younger Years, slew the Egyptian that strove with his Countryman, and all along interceded for them, even when they murmured against him, and were ready to stone him. The Judges of Israel, the Prophets, especially *Elijah, Elsha, Isaiab, Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah*; and Queen *Esther* as well as *Mordecai*, have all along, in the times of the *Old Testament*, been shining Examples of eminent Love to their Country. And in this as well as their other Virtues, what is recorded of them; as the Apostles do intimate, was written for our Example and for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come (1 Cor. 10.) It is in this Sense that the

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Author to the Hebrews, calls them a *Cloud of Witnesses*. Witnesses unto the Faith that works by Love.

And I shall only add, that if the love of ones Country is considered, as such a Branch of natural Affection, as no virtuous Man is capable to shake off, or be divested of it. I say, if it is thus considered; then is not, *to be without natural Affection*, marked out by Christianity, with the vilest Brand of Infamy (*Rom. 1. 31. 2 Tim. 3. 3.*) To add more upon this Head, would be redoundant. And upon the whole; after things are fairly represented, they must be shameless, that can insinuate any Defect in the Revelation we enjoy, with regard to those two Articles, of *Friendship*, and *the Love of ones Country*.

it is further rendred useful, by the awful Regard, and the Attention, it doth claim, as the Word of the infinite God, and a Manifestation made by himself of his own Will.

And the *Third* Observation is, That it may be yet more effectually useful, by the Aids of inward Grace it promiseth to all who do embrace and entertain it, for directing and assisting, in the Paths of Virtue and Holiness, by which they may even in this Life, advance the Perfection of their Nature; and thereby attain a Title to eternal Felicity. This inward Grace doth still accompany the external Revelation; operating upon the Heart and Life of all sincere Christians. This Promise of the divine Grace doth never fail of its due Effect, if we are not wanting to our selves. And this is an Encouragement that renders the revealed Word of God an incomparable Benefit. And altho' what is now already at some length represented, doth go far

far to prove the necessity of such Revelation, especially to the ignorant Multitude. Yet I shall at present suppose that all this doth only infer, That this Revelation, so qualified, may be useful; having before treated of the moral Evidence by which it is established.

Yea further, at present I shall give, *i. e.* Suppose, tho' I am far from granting it to be true. That the Light of common Reason is in itself, if exactly attended unto, and duly consulted on all the emergent Occasions of moral Duty, sufficient to teach and direct, not only a refined Philosopher; but also all such as are of a middle Capacity and Improvement; provided those Philosophers and Men of Mediocrity are duly sincere, and do their utmost to consult their Reason, and are always attentive to its Dictates. But is it not possible that the rational Faculty, in the Office of directing to moral Duty may sometimes be inadvertent, and unguarded, even in the Philosophers themselves, as well as the Gentlemen of Mediocrity. Especially in the heat of a Passion, or the violent importunity of some sinful Affection; not to mention the habitual Sway of some one, or more, of those unruly Passions and sensual Lusts. Would not any Monitor, in this Case, be of some use, to rouse the indolent Mind; if it were but the daily Admonition of a virtuous Friend? Is not this a Case that demands
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such seasonable help? And is it not of daily Occurrence? And shall the daily and awful Voice of God himself, in the reading or hearing of his holy Word, be of no Significancy? What wise Man will slight and despise the kind Offer of his fellow Creature, to help him in any temporal Affair of great Concern? Especially if he observes Thousands to miscarry, with a Stock as sufficient as his own, and as great Wisdom to manage it; and knows that the Help offered, is fully calculated to facilitate, as well as answer his Use and Intent? And shall the Help of God when offered, even in what relates to our eternal Interest, be the only Help that is to be rejected and despised?

But what I have here hinted, relates only to those Minds that are more refined, and those that are cultivated and improved to some degrees of Mediocrity. And may not the interposal of Divine Help, by the Holy Scripture, be still of more needful Use to the common Bulk of illiterate Mankind, who have few or no degrees of the cultivation of Mind, and are equally liable to all the Snares of Temptation, and to all the Biasses and Assaults of corrupted Nature, and the same Importunity of disordered Passions and Affections?

Yet, when I am making such yielding Suppositions, I shall go one Degree further; and for once, suppose there is some possibility, that all and sundry of Mankind, were capable,

ble, by the Light of common Reason, in the laborious Use and Strength of their own natural Powers, to surmount all the Difficulties that are in their way to the attainment of Virtue in perfection. Yet may not the Divine Help be at least useful in this wrestling State; if it were but to facilitate their Work, especially sometimes in the more difficult Exigencies, when the Conflict is hard, and the Combatant is in danger of being worsted, and inclining to succumb? May not, at least in this Case, the ministering of some Help, both outwardly, and inwardly too, be seasonable and of some use? And yet more especially, if this is a Case of daily Occurrence? Tho' common Sense doth plead for this; yet the Gentleman with whom we dispute, says no. Because the Light of common Reason is absolutely sufficient in it self: Therefore all Help by Revelation must be useless.

When I was upon the general View of his grand Argument, I took notice of this wild and staring Inference. And here I ask again, where he hath offered in all his large Book, any *Medium* that may connect this Antecedent, with his Consequence? Has he not quite forgotten, or neglected the Rules of Reasoning layed down by himself in *Chap. 12. Page 180, &c.* Are there no intervening *Idea*, or *Ideas* that may serve as a Medium to unite these two Propositions? *The Light of common Reason is sufficient in it*

it self: Therefore no Help can be useful. Yes, I formerly mentioned no less than three false Principles or Propositions; some one or other of which, must at least be necessary for connecting his Argument. I have already remarked upon one of them, *viz.* near the end of the second *Chapter*; and I then promised, likewise to expose the Falseness and Absurdity of the other two. And now is the proper time, while I am only upon the usefulness of Divine Revelation; and I am sure I have an easy Task.

The first of the two is indeed the most natural *Medium* for connecting his Argument, *viz.* *That every Help, yea every Thing is useless and superfluous, that is not absolutely necessary.* For it is obvious that all his Reasoning upon this Point, must stand, or fall, upon the begging, and granting of this absurd Proposition: A Proposition that hath not, and cannot have, the least Shadow of any *Medium* to connect its own Terms. And that I may briefly discuss the Confutation of it;

I shall suppose this Gentleman himself, to be so well provided with all the Necessaries of Life, as there is no Man on Earth can match him: Yet surely there may be some accidental Occasions, in which some help of his fellow Creatures may be useful to him. We can scarcely affirm that a Bed is necessary, or a Glass of small Beer. For some can make a shift without them; lie on
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the Ground, and feed on Bread and Water; in a torn Habit, without a Night Cap, or a Pair of Shoes. But would all degrees of some better Accommodation, be quite useless and superfluous? There is never a Workman of any common Occupation, that is not capable to expose the Absurdity of this wild Principle. None of them who have not some Tools, that are useful to facilitate, tho' not absolutely necessary to the perfecting of their Work. In the more liberal Arts that require great Application of Mind, is not a Master needful to instruct? and are not his Rules useful and expedient? Tho' there have been some of a more happy Genius, that have invented those Rules, without the necessity of being taught them. Is not the Algebra useful and expedient, altho' not absolutely necessary to the Mathematicks, in which Science, there was great Proficiency without it? Is not the Mariners Compass needful, as well as useful, in Navigation; altho' before the virtue and use of the Loadstone, was known; Navigation had made an astonishing Shift? And tho' even to our Days, the Rule for finding the Longitude is not settled, and the Navigation hath been pretty well performed without it: Yet why are there such *Premiums* proffered to the Discoverer, if nothing may be useful that is not necessary?

I may now proceed to remark on the remaining false Principle, formerly also mentioned,

tioned, as what the Gentleman and his Friends may think to be a sufficient *Medium* to connect his Argument, *viz.* That *if Revelation is not necessary for Men ; God could not (in Point of Wisdom) have given it.*

This is a Principle that hath some Coincidence with that other absurd one, which I have been, but just now, exposing: Only the wildness of it doth truly exceed that of the other. For the other only makes every thing useless, superfluous, needless, and in vain, that is not necessary: But this makes it inconsistent with the Wisdom of God, to afford a Revelation unto Men, if it is not necessary for them. It is not easy to imagine, how this wild Notion could ever fall into the Man's Head: And yet it is the Foundation of all his copious Pleading against the positive Institution of any such things as would not be necessary if they were not commanded; as well as it may be a pretended *Medium* for connecting his grand Argument.

Is it possible that this Man is not himself conscious of the Absurdity of this Principle? Is there any Man of common Sense alive, who believes there is a God, the Author and Fountain of all the Comforts he enjoys; who is not sensible that he is every Day and Hour, deriving many things from the Divine Bounty, that are not absolutely necessary for him? And yet, whatever degrees of this, is beyond absolute necessity; must it all be inconsistent with the

Wisdom of God : Even while God is in this manner giving liberally unto all ? Shall Men charge the very Bounty of God, even to themselves with Folly ? Is there nothing beyond absolute necessity, relating to the Body, the Mind, or the Estate, bestowed by the Bounty of God, upon this Man himself ? And is this his Gratitude ? In a Word this Principle gives such Horrour, and Confusion, as makes it grating to treat of it. And must not that grand Argument be naughty and absurd, as well as dangerous, that needs such hideous Principles to support it ?

But this Author pretends only from the Wisdom of God, to conclude against a Revelation, if it is not necessary, and may be willing to admit of any other Instances of the Divine Bounty if they are but useful. Well ; is there any reason for this Exception or to exclude Revelation ? Yes he says, there is ; *viz.* Because this serves only for a handle of Imposition by the wicked Priests ; who may abuse it to their own bad Purposes. And may not other Men abuse it as well as the Priests ? Are there any Talents bestowed by the Bounty of God, which Men may not abuse, which some Men do not abuse ? And if Men do so, by any such Talents as are not absolutely necessary, is the giving these Talents any Argument against the Wisdom of God ? Seeing he both can, and will punish the Abuse of them.

them. And if this same Man hath received any distinguished Talents of this kind, and doth abuse them, as well as he doth the Gift of Revelation : Is it wisely done in him to charge God in this manner ; as if he acted inconsistent with his Wisdom ? But I am proceeding to plead, even the necessity of the Divine Revelation : And therefore need not longer insist on detecting the Absurdities, whereof this false Principle is fruitful.

And there is more than enough now said to expose the Falsity and Absurdity of all those wild Principles mentioned. And yet absurd and senseless as they are, there is no other Pillars, or Foundation, without them, that can support the grand Argument, by which this bold Man pretends to prove that the Holy Scriptures are useless and superfluous.

Now tho' the Reasoning in this Chapter doth really evince the great and extreme need of Revelation. Yet I have hitherto confined my Plea in defence of the Holy Scriptures, to vindicate their Usefulness. I am now, under God, to plead for, and treat of their necessity.

C H A P. IV.

*Of the Necessity of this Divine Revelation,
Because the Light of common Reason,
is not a perfectly sufficient Rule of moral
Duty.*

§ 1. **I**N those Matters that relate to our Temporal Interests and Concerns, Men are naturally so eager in the pursuit; that altho' a thing proposed, is not absolutely necessary to attain the Ends at which they aim; which are commonly the Health, the Profits, Pleasures, and Conveniencies of this Life: Yet if they conceive it may be but an useful Mean for promoting of those Ends; there needs no more to perswade them to embrace and cultivate it: Any probable View is enough to whet their Care and Industry in the Use and Improvement of it. But alas! it is quite otherwise in Matters that relate to our eternal Interests. For though these are the great Things that do chiefly concern Men, in comparison of which, all the Enjoyments of this Life are but Trifles; yet such is the Corruption of Mankind, that those Trifles fill their Heads and their Hearts; and are generally the chief things that ingross their Pursuits and employ their Cares. Insomuch that to tell them, the Bible may be very useful to promote their eternal Felicity; but withal that

it is not very Necessary too ; for others have made, and may make, a good Shift without it ; will undoubtedly have much the same effect, as if it were told them, they might even let it alone, and never trouble their Heads about it. If it is considered only as a Guide that may be useful, but not Necessary ; in all likelihood there will be little use made of it, as a needless Guide. It is indeed certainly true that the dutiful and awful Regard which the rational Creature owes to the great and infinite Creator, doth indispensibly bind, and ought to determine, Men to receive with Gratitude, and to make a due Use and good Improvement of all his Gifts ; and more especially of what is bountifully designed to promote their eternal Happiness. And it is also true, that this awful Regard, in this respect due, is exceedingly heightened by the Prospect of accounting to God for the Neglect or Contempt of his Gifts, and the not improving them in the manner he designs, or doth require. And therefore I do not say, that this effect upon Men, from their Perswasion, that tho' the Bible may be very useful for promoting their eternal Felicity, yet that it is not likewise very Necessary ; is justifiable ; or a reasonable Effect. For on the contrary, it is a vile Ingratitude, and such a contempt of God, and his choice Gift, as is a heinous Provocation, and doth plead for Punishment. But my Meaning is, that

however unjustifiable this bad Effect is truly; yet such is the Corruption of Mankind that this woful and perverse Effect will unavoidably follow. And there are few whose Occasions have led them to entertain Discourse upon this Subject of Divine Revelation of late; who do not more or less observe this. And that the looser sort, begin to insult those that are more serious, with a scornful Air: Telling them that the best Defences of Revelation do not pretend to plead that it is Necessary. It is therefore to be wished, that those more learned and bright Men that have so strenuously vindicated the Usefulness of the Divine Revelation, against the bold Attack of the same Author whose grand Argument I now examine, had also employed their greater Capacity and Talents, to vindicate the Necessity of this Divine Revelation. For as this is in it self, a certain Truth; so nothing that falls short of this, will stop the Mouth of Infidelity. And if I can in my weak Capacity contribute to this by such Hints as may be hereafter improved to greater Advantage, by more skillful Hands: I hope it will thereby have good Effect, and I'm sure, I am in my Duty.

I therefore now pretend to prove: That the Light of common Reason, in the present State of Mankind, is not, in it self, sufficient to teach and direct every Man, with respect to every thing he ought to know, believe, profess, and practise, without Revelation.

lation. And therefore that this Light of common Reason, is not a perfect Rule of moral Duty. And consequently that the further help by Divine Revelation, is not only useful and expedient but highly needful. Yea that because of the weakness of human Nature in this State of frail Life, it is absolutely Necessary; unless God is pleased to supply the want of it, in some other uncommon, or unknown way.

For evincing this I affirm, and by God's Help, shall prove, That there are sundry Doctrines and Truths, that are the prime Principles, chief Springs, and Foundation of moral Duty; which every Man ought to know and believe, and consequently likewise profess, and practise according to them. And yet they are such Truths, as the Light of common Reason is not in it self sufficient without Divine Revelation, to bring every Man to the Knowledge and Conviction of them. And if this shall be performed in such manner as is fully convincing, our Gentleman's grand Argument will be thereby subverted with a Witness.

The Existence of a Deity, a Truth which every Man is not capable to discover by the mere Light of common Reason.

§ 1. The first of those Doctrines or Truths, which I shall name is the Existence of a Deity. I am far from affirming that this is not to be discovered by the Light of com-

mon Reason : I am well convinced that it is ; and am conscious of the rational Evidence by which it may be demonstrated. But what I affirm is this ; *viz.* That every Man is not capable to make this Discovery by the Light of common Reason : Because it is only to be made, in the use of such abstracted Ideas, and such metaphysical Reasoning and Manner of Deduction, as is beyond the Reach and Capacity of one among an hundred of the Illiterate.

Now the Proof of this great Truth of the Existence of a Deity, that is of greatest Facility, is certainly that which is drawn from the visible Works of the Creation. And yet there have been great Philosophers, who have been so far from making the Discovery of this great Truth, from this Proof of it, of themselves ; that they did not receive the Conviction of it with all the Help of the clearest Light into which other learned Men had placed this Proof. I suppose this Gentleman will modestly allow, that *Aristotle* was a Man no less acute than himself, and had his Eyes open to observe this visible World, having treated of the Works thereof, in a great Variety of them, with no small Force of Spirit. And yet with all his uncommon Penetration, he did not perceive the Evidence of this Proof : Altho' he owned a Deity without it. And therefore it could not be from any Prejudice against this great Truth it self, that the Evidence
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of this Proof under view, did not convince him. For he believed and expressly taught, the Existence of Matter from all Eternity. And upon that Supposition, there could be no Proof drawn from the Creation of the material World for the Existence of a Deity. And consequently, that Supposition must be destroyed, by demonstrating its Absurdity, before any Proof of the Existence of a Deity, can be drawn from this Creation. And withal, the Demonstration of that Absurdity is a Task to which the Capacity of the greatest Part of the illiterate Multitude, is very unequal.

It is easy for any Man, for this Gentleman himself, to make the Experiment. Let one or more, of the illiterate Multitude be taken up, at chance, and have the Question put to them separately, *viz.* How they will demonstrate this mentioned Absurdity of the eternity of Matter? Or even when this is demonstrated by another in their hearing, How they will infer from the Works of the Creation, the Existence of a Deity, by the mere Light of their common Reason? Or how they will prove it by any other Topic whatsoever, without the Help and Instruction of some more learned? And from the Experience I have often had, I am well assured that all I have affirmed will soon be manifest.

Nay I adventure further to affirm, that the Persons on whom I propose this Experiment

riment may be tried ; shall be found so far from being capable of themselves, by the Light of their common Reason, to deduce the clear Proof of the Existence of a Deity, from any Topic whatsoever, without some Help (which is all that is needful for me in the present Argument) That after our Gentleman himself, shall undertake the Instruction of them for a Month together, and ply them painfully with all his Discipline, “ of the Nature of Things ; of Facul-
“ ties, and their immediate Objects ; of the
“ Ideas the Mind conceiveth of them ; of
“ Apprehending, Judging, and Inferring ; of
“ his simple Ideas and his intervening Me-
“ diums ; his Ideas by Sensation, or Reflexi-
“ on ; the Agreement or Disagreement of
“ Ideas, and the Perception of this Agree-
“ ment or Disagreement ; of his Terms, and
“ the joining of his Terms ; his Intuitive
“ Knowledge ; his Intervention of a com-
“ mon Measure in order to his demonstra-
“ tive Knowledge, &c.” And all his pom-
pous apparatus of Logic, formerly menti-
oned. He shall not be able, after all his
hard Labour, and industrious Application,
to bring two of ten of them, to the clear
and distinct Understanding and Perception
of the Force, and convincing Evidence of
any one of the Proofs by which a Deity
is demonstrated by the mere Light of com-
mon Reason, They

They must have small Knowledge of the weakness of Capacity in the illiterate Multitude, who can doubt of this. It is only by Revelation, and an universal Tradition, that the illiterate Multitude of all Nations, do derive the Knowledge and Conviction of a Deity. The first Chapter of the Bible affords to them a greater and more convincing Light and Evidence of the Being of an eternal infinite God, the Creator of the World, than all they are capable of receiving by the mere Light of common Reason, under the Benefit of a long Instruction.

I am well apprised of an obvious Objection, *viz.* that neither the first Chapter, nor the whole of the Bible can be of any use, for the Proof of a Deity, until the Authority of the Scripture itself is established. For this must suppose the Existence of God who is the Author of it. And therefore can be of no use to prove that Existence.

§ 3. The Answer is easy, and it shall be a compendious moral Proof, at once, both of the Divine Revelation, and the Existence of a Deity; *viz.* That when the Books of *Moses* were first delivered to *Israel*, it was as the Word of that God who had rescued them from the *Egyptian* Bondage; and by mighty Wonders, not only wrought for them in that Deliverance, but in a continued Series, throughout their Travels, in the Wilderness, for many Years, proved himself to be the infinite and eternal God,
blessed

bleſſed for ever. Inſomuch that they who firſt received this Revelation, had no need of further Proof of his Exiſtence, by any rational Deduction, in the uſe of ſuch Principles as are evident by the Light of Nature: tho' they had all of them been capable to acquire the Conviction of it, in that manner: Whereas the Multitude of them did doubtleſs labour under the ſame Weakneſs and Incapacity to do this, as the Multitude of the reſt of Mankind. The Evidence they had of his Exiſtence, every Day, and Hour, while they were fed and clothed by Miracle, could not be reſiſted. And then the moral Evidence of the ſame Proof conveyed down to their Poſterity, was in it ſelf ſufficient to afford Conviction to them; and to the whole World after them, that have the ſame Books conveyed and communicated with the ſame moral Evidence: Even altho' there had not been a continued Series of further Revelation and confirming Miracles, to ſtrengthen and encreaſe the Proof of all that had preceded: Until the times of the *New Teſtament*: Which did in the ſame powerful Manner eſtabliſh its own Authority, and all the anterior Revelation. And by the ſame Evidence it is, that the Authority of the whole Bible is ſtill conveyed down to our times. And in this manner the moral Evidence, doth at the ſame time prove both the Exiſtence of a Deity; and that the Holy Scripture is his Word. And

it is in this manner that the very first Chapter of the Bible, as it is confirmed by moral Evidence, carries in it, the Conviction of God's Existence.

And indeed, so far as I am able to conceive, I cannot hesitate to affirm : That all the Knowledge of a Deity which the Bulk of illiterate Mankind are capable of attaining, neither is, nor can be, attained by them in the scientific Way, by rational Deduction and Demonstration, from Premisses of Self-evidence, in the mere use of their own natural Faculties, with all that share of the Light of common Reason which they enjoy : And that the Cultivation of a long and painful Instruction, is necessary to render them capable of this.

It is from long Observation and Experience that I assert this. And although it is not possible to make an universal Induction of all the Individuals of such Illiterate for proving it : Yet let an hundred of them be taken at chance, for making the experimental Evidence ; and the truth of what I affirm will be thereby manifest. And tho' one, or even ten of that Number could be found of a sufficient Capacity to make this scientific Performance (which I am certain will not) yet it is enough to my Purpose, if the rest are found incapable. And this is the only Proof that a Matter of this kind, is capable of receiving. It is owing to the merciful Care, and kind Providence of God, that

that there is an universal Tradition of a Deity (of which I shall be obliged to say more hereafter) and to the yet greater Mercy of the continued Manifestation of this great Truth, in the Holy Scriptures, that the Illiterate Multitude, or Bulk of Mankind, have any Knowledge of God, or the Conviction of his Existence. And with Submission to those of more Knowledge, I am bold to affirm; That a moral Evidence (which includes universal Tradition) is all that the illiterate Multitude have, even for the Conviction of a Deity, as well as for their Conviction that the Holy Scriptures are his Word, *i. e.* in the best use they are capable to make of the mere Light of common Reason; and until the great Evidence of Divine Faith is introduced; which is to be the Subject of the second Part of this Performance. And indeed it is to give a rational Account of that Evidence of Divine Faith that I have been chiefly determined to employ my poor Labour in this short Treatise.

Mean time, what I have here represented in relation to the Existence of a Deity, which is the first and great Foundation of all Religion, is enough to prove; That the Light of common Reason, is not, in it self, sufficient without Revelation, to teach and direct every Man, with respect to every thing that he ought to know, believe, &c. And that not only some Men; but the great Bulk

Bulk of Mankind, are incapable, of themselves, to demonstrate this great Foundation-Truth, in a scientific Way; and are obliged to derive their Conviction of it, either merely from the universal Tradition (where they have not Revelation) or from the Holy Scripture in the way of moral Evidence; so far as the Conviction of it, is to be attained by the use of their uncultivated Reason, and without all Divine Help.

But against this, our Gentleman objects, the Words of St. Paul, in Rom. Chap. 1. Verses 19, 20, 21, &c. Not truly that he pays the least regard to this Authority, but as an Argument *ad hominem*, i. e. against those who own the Authority of Scripture. The Words of the Text are. *Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power, and Godhead, so that they are without excuse; Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Hearts were darkened, &c.*

From this he would infer, That every Man is by the mere Light of common Reason, capable to draw from the Works of the Creation, a convincing Proof, both of the Existence of God, and of all that may be known of him. But doth the Apostle affirm

firm this? No such Matter. This Text doth neither affirm, that every Man is capable to draw this Proof of the Existence of God, from the Works of the Creation; nor that *all that may be known of God*, is attainable by mortal Man. Yea the Angels and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, may be still encreasing in their Knowledge of God, whose Perfections can never be comprehended by a finite Capacity. *Job 41. 7.*

The Case was plainly this. The Apostle was writing to the Christians at *Rome*, which was then the Place of the most polite Learning in the World. And doubtless many were there, among the learned Heathens, who had not only the Knowledge of a Deity by universal Tradition, but were also capable to draw the Proof of this great Truth; and of much more, tho' not of *all* that may be known of God, even in a scientific Way, from the Light of common Reason. And it is evident that the Apostle had those learned Men in his View; from the twenty third Verse in those Words, *But became vain in their Imaginations*, in the Original, *τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν*, which literally signifies their *Reasonings*, but is render'd their *Imaginations*, because they were only false and imaginary Reasonings. And those learned were thereby foolishly drawn to give bad Instruction, and a vile Example to the Multitude by their Idolatries and Debauchery;

bauchery: As in the following Verses, *Changiog the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like unto corrupted Man*—And indulging their vicious Affections, in abominable unnatural Lust, and all manner of hainous Wickedness. This is plainly the Scope of the Apostle. Yet at the same time, likewise, that very Knowledge of God, which even the illiterate Multitude had by the universal Tradition, was enough to render them also inexcusable, for being debauched, and led into such gross Idolatry, and licentious Immorality. For even by that universal Tradition the Multitude knew, that God was the Creator of the World. And the Wisdom, Power, and such other Attributes of God, as the visible Things that are made by Him, do proclaim, did render their gross Idolatry, and immoral Debauchery, without excuse.

But it was far from his Design to affirm, that the Bulk of illiterate Mankind, is capable, of themselves, by the mere Light of common Reason to prove the Existence of a Deity, from the Works of the Creation: Nor is there any thing in the Words of the Apostle that doth insinuate this. And far less can they bear the yet more absurd Gloss, which this Gentleman seems desirous to fix upon them: As if *all* that may be known of God, were by the Apostle affirmed, to be so evidently displayed by the

Works

Works of the Creation, as either the Learned, or Illiterate, could thereby discover it *all*, to perfection, by the mere Light of common Reason. *See his Chap. 14, Page 378, and top of the following Page compared with Chap. 5, Page 48, Line 21, 22.*

But may it not here be pleaded by the Adversaries of Divine Revelation, That seeing we allow the Learned are capable, to demonstrate the Existence of a Deity, by the mere Light of natural Reason; why then may not they instruct the Illiterate in this great Truth sufficiently, without any need of Revelation? I answer, that as this Way of Instructing can never claim that awful Attention and Regard that is due to Divine Revelation; and therefore can never be so effectual. So all the Instruction the Learned can give, is only such as the Illiterate are capable of receiving. And laying aside the Holy Bible, with the moral Proof of it; there is no other Topic of which they are capable to judge, but that of universal Tradition. And tho' it is, by their common Reason, that they are capable to judge even of this; yet this is not a Topic that the Light of common Reason doth afford. The Learned may indeed with Abundance of Truth and Candor, assure them, upon their honest Word (which our Author laughs at, if Priests are the Instructors) that they have the demonstrative Evidence of this great Truth. And although
this

this also carries in it some degree of moral Proof, if those learned Men are credible ; yet neither is this from the Light of common Reason in themselves ; it is Authority, human Faith, and of the same Nature, with Believing as the Church Believes ; which our Gentleman calls Priest-craft : Unless the Learned can infuse the same demonstrative Evidence into them. For my Opponent and I, do well agree with Mr. *Woollaston* in “ this ; “ That this is only to be done ; by “ opening the Eyes of their Understanding, “ so as they may find the Reasonableness of “ it in their own Mind. For no Man can “ any more discern the Objects of his own “ Understanding, and their Relations, by the “ Faculties of another Man ; than he can “ see with another Man’s Eyes ; or than one “ Ship can be guided with the Helm of another.” And how shall the Eyes of the Understanding, in all the Illiterate be so opened, as to find in their own Mind, the Reasonableness of that demonstrative Evidence which the Learned have, even of the Existence of a Deity ; when it is all drawn from such abstracted Ideas, and in such way of Reasoning from them, as is beyond the reach of their weak Capacities?

And I only further add ; that altho’ their Capacity could reach to all this, by the Benefit of a long and painful Instruction : Yet if they cannot attain this scientific Evidence, *proprio Marte*, i. e. Merely by their own

Light of common Reason, and without Help; then surely it is not true, that every Man in the present State of Mankind, hath such Light of common Reason, as is sufficient, in it self, to teach and direct him, with respect to every thing that he ought to know, believe, &c. And now, let our ingenious Gentleman confute me, if he can; by pointing to any one such easy Proof of this great Truth, the Existence of a Deity, which is the first Foundation of all Religion, as they, the illiterate Multitude, can well form. For it is obvious that it is not possible to confute me otherways.

I might here also reason, in much the same manner, with respect to sundry of the Divine Attributes, all of which have Influence on moral Duty; and likewise shew the Incapacity of the Bulk of Mankind to attain any competent Knowledge of them, of themselves, by the mere Light of common Reason. But by what hath been treated, upon the Existence of the Deity; every Reader who is in any degree accustomed to think, and reason, may do it, of himself. And therefore waving this, I shall proceed to name a few more of those Doctrines and Truths that are the chief Springs of moral Duty, which every one ought to know and believe; and yet are such, as the Light of common Reason, is not in it self sufficient, without Divine Revelation, to bring every
Man

Man to the Knowledge and Conviction of them.

The Divine Providence another of those Truths, of which every Man is not capable to attain the Knowledge and Conviction, by the mere Light of common Reason.

§ 4. The Doctrine of a Providence, both Common and Special or Particular, by which God doth rule the whole Creation, and for ever govern in all the Transactions and Events that do occur, throughout the Universe ; is justly allowed to be no less the Dictate of an universal Tradition, than the Existence of a Deity. For all the Offices and Rites of religious Worship that hath always, more or less obtained, wherever a Deity hath been owned ; do plainly testify this. And withal this Doctrine and Truth is so plainly revealed in the Holy Scripture, that he who runs may read it. *Mat. 10. 29. Luke 12. 6, 7. Prov. 16. ult.* To deny this Divine Providence, hath much the same Influence with regard to all Religion, as the disowning of a Deity : And doth equally subvert the Foundation of moral Duty, in the most important Branches. Leaving no place for Gratitude to God on the account of any other Benefit than that of Creation : No Place for Trust in him ; Hope in his Favour, Dependance on his Care, Resignation to his Will, or Prayer to him : And

cannot fail to have a bad Influence on the Morals of Man, not only in his Conduct with regard to God himself; but with respect to Society and his fellow Creatures: Because of that blind Chance, or that fatal Destiny and Chain of all Occurrences, which would otherwise take place, and render all humane Care and Endeavour needless. And also on other Accounts; The short-sighted humane Mind, that is conscious of its own Infirmary, must needs treat of such awful Subjects, with a trembling Hand. I would not call a Stumbling-block even before an Infidel that doth but own a Deity. My Design is plainly to use my weak, tho' best Endeavour, for removing all Stumbling-blocks; by inviting and perswading Men, to give Access and Admittance to the Heavenly Light of the Divine Word, as a necessary Guide, to the weak, decayed, imperfect, Light of common Reason, of which Men are so apt to make an Idol. And it is under such awful Impressions, and with this charitable View, that I proceed upon this Subject.

It is certainly uneasy and disagreeable to any ingenuous candid Mind, to imagine that a Creator of infinite Perfection, Wisdom and Goodness should have framed a World, wonderful and curious; and placed therein Creatures endowed with Reason: And then leave all to Chance or Fate; without his own governing Conduct. And there are also many o-
other

ther Topics, in great Variety, that afford Evidences which are highly probable, for giving a Conviction of this Divine Providence. And it is upon the Evidence which such Topics do afford, that the wisest, most learned, and best Men, who were destitute of that Revelation which we enjoy, have always entertained the Belief of it. But we have to do with a sort of Free-thinking Gentlemen, who will allow of no Principle, or Principles and Rules of Duty which are established by any Evidence that falls short of Demonstration. This is the Evidence they demand for our Divine Revelation; affirming peremptorily, that without this, it ought not to be admitted. So that in our Reasoning with such Men, we have right to demand, not only their demonstrative Proof, of this Divine Providence; but also such a demonstrative Proof of it; as every Man is, by his own Light of common Reason, capable of himself, to perform. For without this is done, our Gentleman's grand Argument is destroyed: Seeing it is so evident that this Truth, is one of the Foundations, and chief Springs of all Religion, and moral Duty.

But let our right to demand of them such Proof, be ever so just: Yet they are the Men, who will be the last to endeavour the finding out such Demonstration. Alas! it has been long their Aim, to shake all things loose. And if they had a Demonstra-

tion against a Divine Providence, we should soon hear of it : Even because it is a chief Spring of moral Duty.

Now, a Divine Providence doth necessarily suppose the Existence of a Deity. And therefore if the Bulk of Mankind, being Illiterate, are incapable of demonstrating this Existence, by the mere Light of Reason, and of themselves ; as hath been sufficiently evinced ; then certainly there is no place left to this Light of common Reason, for teaching, or discovering to the said Bulk, the certainty of a Divine Providence. And tho' this Remark alone, might serve my Purpose : Yet this is a Subject that claims to be treated of in a more special, and separate manner. And therefore I proceed to shew more particularly, that the Difficulties of reducing the Proof of this great Truth, to any demonstrative and scientific Evidence ; are truly such, as do not only exceed all the Capacities of the illiterate Multitude : But are puzzling to those of the greatest Penetration, and most accomplish'd Learning. And to this End, I shall suppose, what I'm sure will be allowed, *viz.* That the learned Mr. *Woollaston*, is the distinguished Author, who laying aside all Revelation, has carried the Light of common Reason, as the Rule of moral Duty, to the highest Pitch ; in his celebrated Book, *The Religion of Nature delineated*. His penetrating Mind was conscious, of the Necessity
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of believing and owning this great Truth under view, as a necessary Spring of all Religion and Morality. And indeed he has treated of it, in such manner, as could never have proceeded, from one that had not been well improved by the Instruction of Christianity. And it was plainly the Province of that eminent Author, in pursuance of the Giantick Task, he had undertaken to demonstrate and establish this great and fundamental Truth, from such Topics as the Light of natural Reason could afford, in the same manner, as he had proved the Existence and Perfection of the Deity. And we may be well assured, that he did not neglect to examine and ponder, all the Arguments for the Proof of this Divine Providence, that have been suggested by the Philosophy either of Ancients or Moderns. And withal, he was himself endowed with an Invention incomparably fertil. And therefore we may reasonably conclude, that if he had perceived, any short and easy Proof of it, from Principles of *Self-evidence*; and such as is obvious to the Capacity of the Bulk of Mankind; he would never have concealed it, and chosen rather to undergo, the far more laborious, long, and intricate Way of Proof. It seems his fruitful Mind, laying aside Revelation, and all those Topics of high Probability which the Philosophy of the learned Ancients had only to rely upon; could not excogitate or suggest any
other

other way of proving this Truth, but in the following manner. *viz.* Page 95 to 114.

§ 5. *First*, "By observing that there are
" Laws by which natural Causes do act,
" and according to which the several Phæno-
" mena that occur in the World, do regu-
" larly succeed; and in general the Consti-
" tution of Things is preserved. That there
" are Rules observed, in the Production of
" Herbs, Trees, and the like. That the
" several Kinds of Animals are furnished
" with Faculties proper to direct and deter-
" mine their Actions. That they are placed
" and provided for, suitable to their re-
" spective Natures and Wants. *And Lastly*,
" *That particular Cases relating to ratio-*
" *nal Beings, are taken care of, in such man-*
" *ner as will at last agree best with Reason."*

And having made this Observation, he sub-
sumes, "That such Laws and Provisions can
" come originally from no other Being, but
" from him who is the Author of Nature.
" Because *First*, Those Things whose very
" Being depends on God, cannot exist under
" any Condition repugnant to his Will; and
" therefore can be subject to no Laws or
" Dispositions which he would not have them
" subject to, *i. e.* which are not his. And
" *Secondly*, Because there is no other Being
" who is not himself Part of the World, and
" whose Existence doth not depend on God;
" and therefore is incapable of imposing
" Laws, or any Scheme of Government upon
" the

“the World. And then having told us,
“that by the Providence of God, he means,
“his governing the World by such Laws,
“and making such Provisions as are menti-
“oned; he infers, that if there are such
“Laws, there is a Providence.” This is the
first Proof he useth.

His *Second Proof* is by examining, whether, or not, this Divine Providence, not only common or general, but more especially, that which is particular, is possible? And then, after his ingenious and elaborate Examination, finding it possible, and especially, because (to use his own Words) “it
“is impossible for any thing, whose Exist-
“ence flows from God, ever to grow so far
“out of his reach, or to be so emancipated
“from under him, that the manner of its
“Existence should not be regulated and de-
“termined by him. He therefore concludes
“that it actually is. *Page 110. Line 10.*
“Because God is a Being of perfect Reason.
“And if Men are treated according to Rea-
“son; they must be treated according to
“what they are. The Virtuous, Just, Com-
“passionate, as such. And the Vicious,
“Unjust, Cruel, &c, accordingly to what
“they are. And their several Cases must
“be taken, and considered as they are.
“Which cannot be done without such a
“Providence.”

And seeing all that follows in this Author
upon this Subject; is only for illustrating of
those

those two Arguments ; I may well presume that they are brought by him, to prove not only the general, but also the special and particular Providence. And that this is the *intent* of the first of them, as well as of the second, is evident from these Words : *And Lastly, That particular Cases relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in such manner, as will at last agree best with Reason.* And it must be no less evident to any Body who shall attentively read what is hereafter faithfully copied from him ; that He and I, have the same Notion of what is to be understood by *the particular Providence*. I have dropt this here, because it has been suggested to me : That perhaps he has a different *meaning* from mine, when he mentions the *more special* and *particular* Providence : And that the first of his Proofs perhaps hath not the said *special* Providence in its view. Indeed there is a Perplexity in his Management of this Subject, that is not usual in this *bright* Author, insomuch that some who read him, think he only useth one Argument all along to the End of this Subject. And this Perplexity is occasioned by his undertaking to demonstrate the *particular* Providence by the *Light of common Reason*, which was enough to turn the Head of the most penetrating Mortal. I have turned his Reasoning into two different Arguments ; not only because I think he plainly doth so himself ; But also because
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the Topics from which he pretends to draw his Conclusion, are absolutely different in themselves. However, what I have above copied from him, is the Sum of all the Proof he useth. And truly the manner in which he illustrates those Topics is ingenious; and like all his other Performances, still carries the Argument as far as it will bear.

I proceed now to ask our Gentleman, if he thinks the Bulk of Mankind, with all the Share they enjoy of the Light of common Reason, is indeed capable to observe the Topics used by Mr. *Woollaston*, and to draw his Inferences? Here surely, if in any case whatsoever, *enarrasse est refutasse*, i. e. the very Supposal is absurd. As to the *Phænomena* of Nature, and those Laws and Rules, which the Learned perceive to be observed by all corporeal Things, both Inanimate and Living, God knows, yea all that have common Sense do know, how short way the Observation of the illiterate Multitude, doth reach. And far less are they capable to discern, how all particular Cases, relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in such manner, as will at last agree best with Reason. Which is a Theme, that doth exceedingly embarrass Mr. *Woollaston* himself: As must be obvious to all the Ingenious, who read his Performance with Attention.

But why do I here confine my self to speak only of the illiterate Multitude? For laying
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ing aside all Divine Revelation, and the Instruction it affords. The learned Philosopher will find it no easy Task, by the Light of common Reason to demonstrate the Necessity or Certainty of a Divine Providence. 'Tis very true that by the Depth of his Knowledge of the *Phænomena* of Nature, and of those Laws and Rules which the Learned perceive to be observed by all corporeal Things, both Inanimate and Living, he may find Argument to demonstrate the necessary Existence of a Being of infinite Power and Wisdom, the great Creator of the World; that hath established those Laws and Rules, and originally Impregnated all his innumerable Works with the Powers, and Springs of their respective Operations, Motions, and Activity, in such beautiful Order, and concordant Harmony of the universal System, as is stupendious and wonderful. But likewise, here he may have Argument of no less force, to demonstrate the Necessity of the continued Influence of the same Divine Power, for continuing and preserving the very Being of his whole Creation, whose various Parts are thus impregnated with their respective Powers and Springs. This being a constant Effect of Power and Wisdom, that is no less wonderful, than the first Creation. And this is what is commonly called a *preserving Providence*. I say, it is very true indeed that the

the Philosopher, may well carry his Demonstration this far.

But when we proceed further, to consider the more special Providence, *i.e.* the ruling and governing Influence of the Divine Power and Wisdom, that implies and requires the particular Application of the Divine Energy and Conduct, in all the various and innumerable Operations, Motions, and Effects of all his Creatures and Works, even in the corporeal World alone considered: We find this is plainly a separate Question. A Question full of Intricacies and Difficulties. And if *Secondly*, We shall yet again proceed, to consider this particular ruling Providence, as it likewise implies and requires the same particular Application of the divine ruling Energy and Conduct, in all the various Conceptions, Determinations and Effects, relating to intelligent rational Beings, and free Agents, capable of doing Good, or Evil, and of being Rewarded, or Punished: The Intricacies and Difficulties that occur upon this Subject, are exceedingly increased. Inso-much that they arise not only beyond the reach of the illiterate Multitude; but are enough to perplex the most acute Philosophy.

I shall shew this with regard to each of these, as briefly as can consist with my being understood.

And *First*. With regard to this special Provi-

Providence as it implies and requires the constant and particular Application of the Divine Energy and Conduct, in all the various and innumerable Motions and Effects, of all his Creatures and Works, even in the corporeal World.

And here, all those Difficulties present themselves that have ever been suggested upon this Subject by the *Epicureans*, and the Doctrine of the *Fatalists*. But I think it will serve my turn, to mention one of their Topics, which doth even suppose a Deity of infinite Perfection, to be the Creator and Preserver of the corporeal World; and that he hath framed the universal System of it, by infinite Power and Wisdom. For all the *Fatalists* themselves do not proceed upon the absurd Hypothesis of a casual Concourse of Atoms. And the Topic which I chuse to represent is this, *viz.*

That in any moving Machine, it would argue the Imperfection of the Work, for serving the Design of the framing Artist, to need his frequent, and much more his constant particular Application: to direct and carry on its continuing Progress in all the course of its Motion. But the ingenious Artist having first formed his Design, and framed his Springs; contrives all his Wheels, and the several Parts of his Work, so as their respective Influence and Operation upon each other, may best attain their design'd Effect; without the Necessity of his

his immediate particular Application, in every gradual Advance of the Motion. We see this performed in Clock-work, so as to measure out the Hours and Minutes, for a tract of Time, in a regular and exact Conformity with the original Design and Contrivance of the Artist. And doubtless the Orreries or Representations, that are artificially framed, of the Motions of the Planets, in their respective Situations and Circuits in our Solar System, may be so improved, that the Machine may continue to carry on the several Motions, suitable to the heavenly natural Course of those Luminaries, according to Astronomical Observation, for a Year together; without the daily Touch of the Operator's Hand.

And where is the Philosopher who can prove that it is not yet more so, in the more perfect Work of infinite Power and Wisdom? Was it not possible for him who gave the very Being to this corporeal World; originally so to contrive his whole Machine of the universal System, originally so to impregnate every Spring of Motion, every Atom, if I may so speak, as well as the greater Mediums or Instruments, which like the Wheels in the Clock, may serve to carry on the progressive Course to all the design'd Effects, without the necessity of a constant, immediate, particular Application of his own Divine Hand? Is there any thing in all this that implies a Contradiction? Nay doth it not plainly seem to be a greater Evidence of the stupendious Art,

and adorable Wisdom of the infinite Operator, to have originally so adapted all corporeal Things, to their respective Influences and Operations upon each other, in such a beautiful Harmony, as if every Particle of Matter were endowed with the Knowledge of its proper Function, and a Desire to perform it? Affording equal Wonder and Delight to the curious and leatned Observer: Who by the experimental Observations he makes, acquires the Knowledge of those Powers and Laws, that are steadily carrying on the Ends of the infinite Architect, in a regular Course: So as to render the humane Mind, able to account for, and explain the *Phænomena* of Nature, in a great Variety. And if all this is possible, from the original and more perfect Constitution of the corporeal World: How then shall the Philosopher prove the necessity, or certainty of the constant, immediate, particular, Interposal, which is the thing understood by the special Providence? Especially from this Topic of Mr. *Woollaston's*, viz. by observing how regularly all Effects in the corporeal World do proceed from their natural Causes, in the several *Phænomena*, in conformity to the original Constitution of Things (without deviating from the Laws of their Nature) by the original Powers with which they are impregnated. An Argument that rather hath a plain Tendency to prove the contrary; to prove, I say, that there is no need

need of any special Providence, with regard to corporeal Causes and their Effects. As we really see it is the boasted Argument of the *Fatalists*.

This is such a Defect in any Argument, that it is surprising to find it over look'd by so distinguished an Author. And the more surprising by what this eminent Author hath himself dropt, even while he is prosecuting this his own Argument, which we now examine; viz. Page 97, Line 6, 7, 8; and again Page 99, Line 21, to Line 4, of Page 100; and again Page 103, Line 15, to Line 27. For in those Places, he plainly owns, he had the full Conviction, that it was possible for the infinite Creator, originally so to contrive the frame of Things relating to the corporeal World, by such an Adjustment; that the whole procedure of their Course, might naturally follow from their original Powers and Springs, and the Laws of their first Constitution. And yet at the same time, it is evident; that the very possibility of this, intirely subverts his own Argument by which he pretends to prove the particular Providence, from the regular, constant, uniform Course of Causes and Effects, in the several *Phænomena* in the same corporeal World. This Trip of the matchless Author, ariseth plainly from his Attempt to demonstrate a Truth, in a scientific Way, which tho' it is in it self certain; yet the Light of common Reason, as now enjoyed,

doth not afford those Principles of Self-evidence, from which the Certainty of it may be scientifically inferred. I could not avoid this Remark, without betraying my Cause, and the Truth ; and this the rather, because the Authority of so deservedly great a Name, is apt with some, to go as far as Argument.

However, I ought here to caution, that this Topic of the *Fatalists*, which I have thus far used against the Philosopher who admits of no Truth that is not to be demonstrated by the Light of common Reason ; doth yet conclude nothing against the Certainty of the special Providence in its most particular Interposals, as this is revealed and believed by Christians. Because, as Mr. *Woollaston* well observes ; *It is impossible for any thing whose Existence flows from God, ever to grow so far out of his reach, or to be so emancipated from under him, as not to be regulated and determined, by him, as he thinks fit, and when he pleaseth.* The possibility of a special Providence must therefore be allowed : And this is the only solid Proof of its possibility, that is brought by Mr. *Woollaston* ; altho' his Attempt to prove it other ways, is laborious.

§ 6. I proceed next, to consider this particular Providence, as it implies and requires, the same particular, constant Application, of the Divine Energy and Conduct, in all the various Conceptions, Determinations, Opera-

Operations and Effects, relating to intelligent, rational Beings, and free Agents, such as Man is, capable of doing moral Good or Evil ; and of being rewarded, or punished. And here, as I said, the Intricacies and Difficulties that occur upon this Subject, are unexpressibly encreased, Inſomuch that they ariſe, not only beyond the Views and Reach of the illiterate Multitude (which mean time is all that I need to prove) but are enough to perplex the moſt acute Philoſophy. And I ſhall here confine my ſelf to obſerve only the hard Shifts to which the celebrated Mr. *Woollaston* himſelf is driven, by the Intricacies and Difficulties which he doth himſelf ſuggeſt. For as this will favour the Brevity I ſtudy ; ſo it may fully answer my Deſign : For none have gone before him, and I ſuppoſe, none will ſoon come after him, to carry the Powers and Performances of the Light of common Reaſon higher.

Now that Branch of his firſt Argument (as before copied from him) which relates to this Point ; is in theſe Words ; *viz.* “ If laſtly, particular Caſes relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in ſuch manner, as will at laſt agree beſt with Reaſon, &c.” And the Reader will here remember, that the State of the Queſtion I am now upon, is plainly this, *viz.* Whether, or not, laying aſide all Divine Revelation, the learned Philoſopher can by the

Light of common Reason, duly demonstrate the great Truth under view, from this Topic, *viz.* That all particular Cases, relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in such manner, as will, at last, best agree with Reason?

Indeed, upon the Supposition, the Proof, the Belief and Conviction, of this special Providence, as it extends to the whole Creation, and more particularly to intelligent Beings; to Man as a free and moral Agent; it is in this Case, a laudable Office, to vindicate the Equity of the Divine Conduct, in all the dark and intricate Occurrences that have ever been observed, or may emerge. And in those that are capable to perform this duty; it is certainly a religious moral Duty; and when well performed, affords great Ease and Comfort, to such weak and perplexed Minds, as may be under strong Temptation, to doubt of the Divine Care and Favour. And this makes the accurate Performance of the learned Dr. *Sherlock*, highly valuable.

But then, with Submission; the pretending to prove the particular Providence, as it relates to rational Beings, by this Argument; *viz.* "Because the particular Cases, relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in such manner, as will at last agree best with Reason;" seems to me, to be a way of Reasoning that is highly unbecoming so bright a Philosopher.

For

For *First*, it seems plainly to be the supposing the very thing to be proved : The particular Providence relating to rational Beings, being nothing else, but the particular Cases, relating to rational Beings, taken care of, in such manner, as will at last, agree best with Reason. The very same, with proving that a thing is ; because it is. And if here, it shall be said in his behalf ; that he is only descending to prove the particular Providence relating to rational Beings, by Parts ; *viz.* By accounting, how the particular Cases relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, in such manner, as will at last, agree best with Reason : And that accordingly hereafter he doth attempt to perform this. To this I answer, That every Reader must be sensible ; that to perform this effectually, would require an universal Induction of such particular Cases ; or at least, of all the various Classes to which they are reducible. A Task which no Philosopher would deliberately undertake.

Secondly, The very thing he supposeth and ought to prove, to make good his Argument ; *viz.* " That particular Cases, relating to rational Beings, are taken care of, " in such manner, as will at last agree best " with Reason ; " tho' it is in it self true, yet it is such a Truth, as can never be proved by the Light of common Reason, until *Dooms-day*. For it is such matter of Fact, as doth not admit even of the Evidence of Fact, before the final Retribution. For then only,

and not until then (*viz. at last*, as he expresseth it himself) will this become manifest. No *Observation* that can be made in this Life, is sufficient to evince it. So that during the Lives of all the Philosophers in the World, instead of Demonstration, they cannot raise this Argument, into a common Proof of Fact. 'Tis very true, that there are a great many Examples, recorded in Sacred History, on purpose to witness this Truth, of the divine particular Conduct and Care of his faithful Servants; so as to display it, even in the temporal final Issue or Event. But now we are abstracting from all Divine Revelation. 'Tis also true that even in prophane History, there are not wanting some notable Examples of this kind. But to turn such *Observation* into a concluding Argument, would require an universal Induction of Facts, uniformly agreeing in such temporal Event, an Induction that is not practicable. Or at least, even to render it a probable Argument, the *Observation* ought to be, that this holds generally true, some particular Cases excepted, from some hidden Causes; as the Learned in the natural Philosophy proceed by their experimental Observations. But the Case is truly quite on the opposite Side, with regard to the *Observation* of the more common temporal Event of things that fall under our View, in this Life of Misery and Trial. And so far as humane Observation can penetrate.

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Infomuch that we all know this is the strongest Objection, which the loose pretended Philosophers do urge against the special Divine Providence, relating to rational Beings, of which we are treating. An Objection which this same great Author finds himself obliged to remove, even while he is treating on Providence.

And it is very remarkable that this most learned and celebrated Man, should still be obliged to the unlucky Choice of such Topics for establishing a Truth, of so great Certainty in it self (and of such high Importance, as a necessary Foundation of moral Duty) as are indeed the strongest Arguments on the opposite Side. The Topic used by the Adversaries of the particular Providence, is taken from what doth occur to *Observation* in the particular Cases relating to rational Beings, in this World; viz. Because commonly the Virtuous are in Calamity, while the Vicious prosper: From which they would infer, that the particular Cases relating to rational Beings, are not taken care of by any Providence. And indeed this Objection, is such as hath stumbled many; yea even the Royal *Psalmist* (*Psal*, 73.) But on the other Hand, when Mr. *Woollaston* pretends to prove the special Providence relating to rational Beings; Because the particular Cases relating to them, are so taken care of, as doth at last agree best with Reason; altho^t it is in self true:
Yet

Yet as I have observed, it is such matter of Fact, as doth not admit even of the Evidence of Fact, before the final Retribution in a future Life. And therefore his Choice of this *Topic* is equally unlucky, as in his other *Topic* taken from the regular and uniform Course of Causes and Effects in the corporeal World. The Cause is obvious. It is plainly this; *viz.* His attempting to prove a Truth in the scientific Way by the Light of common Reason; which doth not afford the Topics that are sufficient. It doth not afford such *Data*, or prime Self-evident Principles, as are necessary to perform the Proof.

But I must not be detained from going on, to observe the hard Shifts to which he is driven by the Intricacies that occur upon this Subject in accounting for the special Providence with regard to intelligent free Beings, by the Light of common Reason: Tho' there have been few Men that have enjoyed that Light to a greater Degree of Brightness than himself.

In *Pag.* 98, and following Pages. He considers intelligent Beings, as free Agents, capable of chusing, refusing, doing and deserving Good or Ill. Their various Deliberations, Determinations, Operations, and Effects, depend all upon their own free Election by which they are rendred capable, of doing moral Good or Evil, and of being rewarded or punished. Occurrences de-
pend

depend on many things, which seem scarcely capable of being determined by Providence. They depend on Mens own Deliberations and free Choice. Sometimes on the Choice of Individuals; sometimes on the Course of Nature, which must affect Men; and upon so many Incidents that one cannot know what is to be done; and if he did know, it may not be within his Power. And then the Choice and Actions of other Men being equally free, and perhaps exceedingly different, yea opposite, having different Effects upon Men of different Tempers, or in different Circumstances, must cause a strange Embarrass, and entangle the Plot. As to the Course of Nature, If a good Man be passing by an infirm Building, just in the Article of falling; can it be expected that God should suspend the force of Gravitation till he is gone? Or that the Fall would be hastened, if a bad Man was there, to make him an Example? If a Man's Safety or Prosperity depends on Winds or Rains, must new Motions be impressed on the Atmosphere, and new Directions given to the flowing Parts of it, by some extraordinary new Influence from God? Must Clouds be precipitated, or kept in Suspension, as the Case of a Man or two requires? And withal, the Wind that carries one to his Port, may drive another from his. The Rain may be useful somewhere, and hurtful elsewhere. In short, must we expect Miracles? Or can there

there be a particular Providence? A Providence, that suits the several Cases, and Prayers of Individuals, without a continual Repetition of Miracles; and a Force frequently committed, not only upon the Laws of the corporeal World; but which is a far stronger Objection, without a Force upon the Freedom of intelligent Agents, by ruling all their Conceptions, Determinations, and Actions, and their Effects, with a directing Energy?

Now to get rid of all this embarrassing Labyrinth of Intricacies, what shift can the illiterate Multitude make? But leaving the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, to find a Clue for extricating them by their mere *Light of common Reason*. Let us observe how the sublime Philosopher now, under our Eye, acquits himself.

§ 7. He soon thinks it first necessary, to suppose the Prescience of God with regard to all future Things, in order to establish the possibility of the special Providence. And therefore, likewise necessary, not only to vindicate the Possibility, but also to establish the Certainty of this. And here I shall begin with one Attempt he makes; not that it is what he begins with; but because it is of a Nature different from all the other ingenious Train and Series of the Efforts he useth; and that we may not be again encumbered with it, in our Procedure. It is in his Page 103.

Where

Where he says; "It is not impossible that such Laws of Nature, and such a Series of Causes and Effects, may be originally designed; that not only general Provisions may be made for the several Species of Beings: But even particular Cases, at least many of them, may be provided for, without any Innovation or Alteration of the Course of Nature. It is true this amounts to a prodigious Scheme — I cannot deny such an Adjustment of Things to be within his Power (*viz.* the Power of God) The Order of Events proceeding from the Settlement of Nature; may be as compatible with the due and reasonable Success of my Endeavours and Prayers (as inconsiderable a Part of the World as I am) as with any other Thing or Phenomenon, how great soever." Again in *Pag. 104. Lin. 15.* "And thus the Prayers which good Men offer to the all knowing God, and the Neglects of others, may find fitting Effects already forecasted in the Course of Nature. Which Possibility may be extended to the Labours of Men, and their Behaviour, in general." And then as a Confirmation of this Scheme, he observes that in Fact, Men are commonly, rewarded or punished (the Virtuous and Vitious) by the general Laws and Methods of Nature, as the natural Attendants and Consequences of their Virtue or Vice —

“as effectually as if God exerted his Power
“to do it, in some peculiar Way.

And now, to make some short Remarks on this : *First*, If this Hypothesis, is allowed, as true in Fact ; it must indeed prove the Presence of God with regard to those things which he hath originally so ordered, disposed, or forecasted. But then, this plainly seems rather to be an Argument against the Need or Certainty of a Particular, immediate, Providence with regard to the things originally so ordered and forecasted, than any Method to establish it. Because such original Disposal leaves no place for, and far less any need of any particular Interposal in things originally so disposed.

Secondly, Whereas he says, Even particular Cases, at least many of them, may be provided for (*viz.* in this way) without any Innovation, or Alteration in the Laws of Nature. As this therefore can only relate to the Prescience of those particular Cases so ordered and forecasted : Then, what is next to be said with regard to the other innumerable particular Cases ?

Thirdly, Why doth he say, Even particular Cases, at least many of them, may be originally so designed in the Law of Nature, or the Series of Causes and Effects ? Why is this Restriction added, *at least many of them* ? If many of them, why not many more ? Why not all particular Cases ? Indeed his penetrating Mind could not but discern
discern

discern; that if this was supposed as a Truth in Fact; it would necessarily introduce the Doctrine of the Physical Predetermination of all Events; even of all the Thoughts, Deliberations, Free Election, and Actions, of intelligent rational Agents. A Doctrine which, I'm sure, was hideous to himself, as must be evident to all who read his Elaborate System. A Doctrine which in the natural Consequences of it, subverts the very Nature of moral Good and Evil. *

* Mean time, by this same Restriction, he suggests a Thought, which joined to another Thought of his, may be of good use to Christians; in their accounting for the infallible Prescience of God, with regard to those Events that have been foretold by his Prophets; such Events as seem to have proceeded from the greatest Complication of Contingencies. Which Thoughts, tho' they are separately dropt by him; yet the Christian Philosopher, reaps the Benefit of both the Thoughts, by joining them together; viz. in manner following. When God hath foretold any Event absolutely, as he is infinitely faithful, so perfect Knowledge and Power can never want proper means to atchieve what he designs. And among other ways of accomplishing the foretold Event, we may well suppose it possible, that he hath so layed and forecasted all the intermediate Causes and Effects, even such of them as relate to intelligent rational Agents, that it is not possible for the Accomplishment to fail. And then follows the other Thought, in the Words of that great Man, *Pag. 107. Lin. 13. viz. —* "That Men have been many times infatuated and lost to themselves — If any one should Object; That if Men are thus over-ruled in their Actions, then they are deprived of their Liberty — The Answer is; that tho' Man is a free Agent, he may not be free as to every thing. His Freedom may be restrained; and he only accountable, (viz. as a moral Agent) for those Acts, in respect of which he is free." But here it is to be minded that if Man were thus restrain'd in every thing; he could not at all be a free Agent, or accountable

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However, this refined Philosopher (tho' this Supposition, upon which I have remarked, should stand for nothing) goeth on, to acquite himself, in his accounting for that Divine Prescience which he finds is necessary, in order to the possibility of the particular Providence.

He justly lays this down as a *Postulatum*. That whatever happens in the World, which doth not proceed immediately from God himself; must either be the Effect of Mechanical Causes, or the Exertions of Living Beings, and of free Agents. As to the Mechanical Causes, even a Man that hath framed a Machine will know what it may perform. And from the imperfect Knowledge we have of the Powers of Gravitation and other Properties of Matter, we can bring about many and useful Effects; and likewise so alter the Determination and Tendency of Things, as to prevent many Effects that would otherways happen, without altering the Course of Nature, or inyading the Laws which it doth uniformly keep. (Yea if that uniform Course were not kept, we could not so serve our selves) So in like-manner it is easy to conceive, not only how God the Framers of the World, must know all the Powers of Mechanical Causes, and what will be their Effects; but also how the particular Providence, with regard to all Eventsof this Kind, that may concern the World, or Mankind, may well be executed, with

without any Violation of the Course of Nature.

But the Difficulty lies in accounting for the Prescience of those things, which depend upon the voluntary Motions of free Agents. And here the sublime Philosopher doth truly exert himself, to the utmost Stretches of humane Sagacity and Invention. Particularly *Pag.* 100, *Lin.* 4, &c. "It is
"well known, says he, That Men can only
"be free (by whom judge of the rest, *viz.*
"of intelligent Beings) with respect to things
"within their Sphere—and their Freedom
"with respect to these, can only consist in a
"Liberty to act without any incumbent
"Necessity, as their own Reason and Judgment shall determine them; or to neglect
"their rational Faculties, and not to use
"them at all, but suffer themselves to be
"carried away by the Tendencies and Inclinations of the Body; which left to it
"self, acts in a manner Mechanically. Now
"he who knows what is in Men's Power,
"and what not; knows the make of their
"Bodies, all the Mechanism and Propensions of them, knows the Nature and Extent of their Understanding, and what will
"determine them this, or that way; knows
"all the process of natural, or second Causes, and consequently how these may work
"upon them. He, I say, who knows all
"this, may know what Men will do, if he
"can know but this one thing more, *viz.*

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"Whe-

“ Whether they will use their rational Faculties, or not? And since we our selves,
“ mean and defective as we are, can in some
“ measure conceive, how so much as this
“ may be done, and seem to want but one
“ Step to finish the Account. Can we deny
“ to the infinitely perfect Being this one Article more?” Again, he observes the Sagacity of some Men, not only in respect of Physical Causes and Effects; but also of the future Actings of Mankind. Give them the Characters and Circumstances of the Persons concerned, they foresee and can foretell many Events, tho’ the intermediate Transactions on which they depend, are not known; and that this Penetration is more in some Men, than in others: That there may be Minds more perfect than the Humane, and therefore penetrate further; and consequently this Power of Discerning must be in God proportionable to his Nature which is Infinite.

But after all; He says, “ This is only a feeble Attempt to shew how far even we can
“ go, toward a Conception of the manner in which future things may be known.
“ But as we have no adequate Idea of the infinite and perfect Being, his Powers,
“ and among them his Power of Knowing, must infinitely pass all our Understanding.
“ It must be something different from, and
“ infinitely transcending all the Modes of
“ apprehending.”

“apprehending Things, which we know
“any thing off.”

He observes further. That we know Matters of Fact, by the help of our Senses, our Memory, or the Report of others ; all of which doth suppose them, either to be present, or to have been once : But in God there must be other ways of Knowing : He has no Organs of Sensation, nor such mean Faculties as we have : And therefore, if he doth not know Things in some other way, he cannot know them at all, even tho’ they were present. We foolishly consider, without minding it, whether future Things may be known by him, in our way of knowing. But the Difficulty vanisheth when we reflect that they must be known to God, in some other way. What is future, may be as truly the Object of Divine Knowledge, as present is of ours. Nor can we tell, what respect, past, present, and to come, have to the Divine Mind, or wherein they differ. We cannot tell how future Things are known perhaps, any more than deaf, or blind People know what Sounds or Colours are. But yet there may be a way of knowing those, as well as there is of perceiving these. As they want a fifth Sense to perceive Sounds or Colours, of which they have no Notion, tho’ they were explain’d to them. So perhaps we want a sixth Sense, or some Faculty, of which future Events may be the proper Objects. Nor have we any more reason to

deny that there is in Nature such a Sense or Faculty ; than the Deaf and Blind have to deny that there is such a Sense as that of Hearing or Seeing. And he adds in *Page 102.* " We can never conclude that it is " impossible for an infinitely perfect Being, " to know what a free Agent will chuse to " do, till we can comprehend all the Pow- " ers of such a Being ; and that is till we " our selves are infinite and perfect."

This is the utmost to which that great Man's Mind could reach. And I shall now make some Remarks.

The first Remark is ; That after this accomplished Philosopher had exerted his Force, racked his great Wit, and stretched his Invention, to account for the mere Possibility of the Divine Prescience of future Things relating to intelligent free Agents ; and all this only to account for the mere Possibility of the special Providence : Yet after all his hard and ingenious Labour, every Reader may observe him to be sensible, that it is not possible for the humane Ingenuity to dive into the Bottom of this unfathomable Depth, even of the Divine Prescience : And that this is one of those Mysteries in Philosophy, that cannot be accounted for in a scientific Way. The *Modus* of it cannot be explained. Indeed he approacheth as near to it and riseth as high, as the Light of common Reason can ascend : And having attained this height, he thinks fit to exprets him-

himself thus : “ *And seem to want but one Step to finish the Account.* Yet this is the *Step* that veils the Mystery. He calls it but one *Step*. But it was impossible for all his Philosophy to determine the Extent and Limits of this *one Step* ; for here he owns the want of Light to discern it. And therefore, for any thing he knew, it might be a *large Step* ; a *Step* that admits of many Gradations. The Child imagines the Sky may be touched on the top of such a Mountain ; and the most learned Philosophers can but talk like Children when the Subject is beyond their Line. Yea this same eminent Author is driven by the Evidence of Truth, yet further to acknowledge not only the Weakness and Insufficiency, but also the absolute Incapacity of the humane Understanding to penetrate into this Mystery ; for whereas before he had said, we seem only to want but *one Step* to finish the Account : Yet upon mature and deliberate Thought, he owns : That as Men who are Deaf or Blind, want a fifth Sense to perceive Sounds or Colours, of which they can have no Notion ; so we may want a sixth Sense, or some Faculty of which the Knowledge of future Things is the proper Object. It was the want of some such Faculty, that rendered this Philosopher incapable to discern the manner of God’s Prescience of future Events. “ And therefore we find he says “ expressly, Page 101. After all, what has

“ been said is only a feeble Attempt to shew
“ how far even we can go toward a Con-
“ ception of the manner, in which future
“ Things may be known. (*viz.* by God.)
“ But as we have no adequate Idea of the
“ infinite and perfect Being, his Powers,
“ and among them his Power of Knowing,
“ must infinitely pass all our Understanding.
“ It must be something different from, and
“ infinitely transcending all the Modes of
“ apprehending, which we know any thing
“ off.”

§ 8. My second Remark is this. That if
this Question, of the Prescience of future
Events that are subjected to the Influence
of free Agents, is considered as purely Phi-
losophical, and laying aside all Divine Re-
velation; it is a hard Task to demonstrate
it Scientifically. And therefore, with Sub-
mission, the attempting to account for the
Modus of it, before it is thus demonstrated,
as Mr. *Woollaston* doth, seem to me pre-
posterous. For indeed all his refined and
curious Reasoning upon the Prescience of
such future Events as are subjected to the
Influence of free Agents, until he advanceth
to his Proof; is upon the matter, nothing
else but accounting for the Modus of it, as of
a thing possible. And withal at last he
owns that he cannot perform even this;
“ from the want of some such Faculty, as
“ like a sixth Sense, would enable to do it.
“ And is obliged to resolve it, into a Power
“ of

“ of knowing that infinitely passeth our Under-
“ derstanding ; that is different from, and
“ infinitely transcending all the Modes of
“ apprehending which we know any thing
off.”

However, that eminent Author doth at last produce his Proof; being the only Topic that Philosophy can suggest, in his *Page 102. Line 11. viz.* “ In the last Place, says he, this
“ Knowledge is not only not impossible, but
“ that which hath been already proved concerning the Deity and his Perfection, doth
“ necessarily infer that nothing can be hid
“ from him. For if Ignorance be an Imperfection, the Ignorance of future Acts and
“ Events must be so. And then if all Imperfections are to be denied of him, this
“ must.”

Now, it is not easy to think, this prying Author did not know the Answers which the Learned of the opposite Sentiment, make to this Argument which yet he doth solve. I shall only mention two.

The first is. That all Things knowable are certainly the Objects of infinite Knowledge. But to know what is not knowable, implies a Contradiction: And that a determinate Knowledge of any Event, must be absolutely Certain, *altho’ that absolute Certainty doth not flow from any Influence of that determinate Fore-knowledge upon the said Event*: Whereas future Contingencies are in their own Nature, absolutely Uncertain:

For it is that which makes them Contingencies. And where is the Philosopher, say they, who can resolve this Riddle, or even comprehend; how any Diversity of Respects can make the same thing, or Event, considered in all the Circumstances that can relate to it self, or its Causes, to be at the same time absolutely Certain, and yet absolutely Uncertain?

Mr. *Woollaston* thinks this Difficulty is taken off, by what he suggests; *viz.* First. "But sure, says he, the Nature of a thing is not changed, by being known, or known before-hand: For if it is known truly; it is known to be what it is. And therefore is not altered by this." But his Opponents reply, That a determinate Fore-knowledge of an Event in it self Contingent, or Uncertain, would be to mis-know it, or to know it quite otherwise than what it truly is. And all that Mr. *Woollaston* says more is this. "The Truth is, God foresees, or rather sees the Actions of free Agents, because they will be; not not they will be, because he foresees them." And the two Similitudes he useth, are only to illustrate this. But then, in the very Terms wherein the Difficulty is proposed, all this is allowed; *viz.* in these Words, although that absolute Certainty doth not flow from any Influence of that Fore-knowledge upon the Event. And yet it is obvious that the allowing thereof, hath as little Influence for abating

abating the Difficulty. And it will be long before Philosophy shall untie this Knot.

This first Answer supposeth that the Perfection of the Divine Knowledge renders it necessary, that it be extended to all Things knowable. But there are learned Men, who pretend to avoid the force of the Argument another way; *viz.*

Secondly. They answer. That when Knowledge is considered as one of the essential Powers of the infinite Being with regard to Objects that are without himself, it is a greater Perfection of this Power, to be at such Freedom in the Exercise and Application of it self, as to extend it only according to his own free Pleasure. And if his essential Power of Operating, Acting, or Activity, with respect to Objects that are without himself, doth not render it necessary, that it be always exerted to the utmost possible Extent: But only according to his own free Pleasure; and that this is plainly a greater Perfection, than if it were otherwise. They ask therefore, why it may not be in the same manner, a greater Perfection likewise of this other respective Power, *viz.* of Knowing, to be under no absolute Necessity of extending it self otherwise than according to his own infinitely wise and free Pleasure? The Strength of the eminent Author's Argument lies in these Words; *viz.* "For if Ignorance be an
" Imperfection, the Ignorance of future
" Acts and Events must be so; and then, if
" all

“all Imperfections are to be denied of him,
“this must.” And they reply, that Ignorance in the Creature, is an Infirmary, because it proceeds from Weakness and Incapacity; from want of Power to know what they are ignorant of. But when it is the free Pleasure of the infinite Being not to extend his Power of Knowing such future Acts or Events; it is not from Incapacity and Weakness, from the want of Power to know them; but from free Choice. His Power of Knowing them, is under no Necessity to do it; which is the Perfection of it: The Creature in Cases innumerable, hath neither the Power of Knowing, nor of not Knowing. Would not weak Man, say they, often be willing to have the Power of casting Things out of his Knowledge? Would not Devils and tormented Spirits wish it? Why then should Men pretend to cramp infinite Perfection?

Let Philosophers ransack their Magazine, of Self-evident Principles, and Connecting Mediums to demonstrate the Absurdity of those Answers; or let the Light of common Reason it self, convince all sober Men, how short way it can go, without the help of Revelation. I would not here, be so understood, as if the two foregoing Answers were really my own Sentiments. But at the same time I truly think there is no Light of common Reason that is able to confute them.

But

But I must proceed to my third Remark, which is, That after this bright Philosopher hath own'd the Incapacity of the humane Mind to dive into the Bottom of this unfathomable Depth and Mystery of the Divine Prescience, so as to account for it in a scientific Way, or explain the manner of it. Yet he says, as above cited ; " We can never conclude that it is impossible for an infinitely perfect Being, to know what a free Agent will chuse to do ; till we can comprehend all the Powers of such a Being ; and that is, till we our selves are Infinite and Perfect."

I wish all that pretend to be Philosophers, would reason in this modest Manner. And if he had first demonstrated his Point ; and vindicated it from implying any Contradiction ; altho' he was unable to account for the (Modus) the Manner of it : In that Case, his Reasoning could not be resisted. But a Philosopher has no right to plead in that manner, before his Hypothesis is proved to be a Truth implying no Contradiction. For at this rate, by flying to this Plea, he might multiply Truths at pleasure, without a Shadow of Truth in any of them. 'Tis a known Rule, That nothing is to be acquiesced in, as a concluded Truth in Philosophy, even tho' it implieth no Contradiction, and is not inconsistent with other known Truths, until it is evidently drawn from some uncontested Topic. But when
this

this is duly performed, the Philosopher has right to use this Plea, even in a Philosophical Mystery; tho' he cannot explain the Modus of it; *i.e.* How it comes to be so.

For, that there are such Philosophical Mysteries, in great Variety, is incontestable. Such as, the Union of Soul and Body in one Individual; the Gravitation of Bodies; the Cohesion of the Parts in Solids; the Origine of humane Souls; the Creating of the visible World without pre-existent Matter; the very animal sensitive Life; the *сторун*, * the Instinct and Sagacity of Brutes; how the Understanding, Will, and Memory, perform their respective Functions? &c. All of these are Mysteries which the Light of common Reason, is neither capable to conceive, nor comprehend. And after the most subtile Research and Penetration, the Reasoning, with regard to them, and many more of that Kind, must at last terminate in the infinite Wisdom and Power of the incomprehensible eternal Being.

And may not I, with equal Reason, ask; Why the same Plea, in the last mentioned Works of Mr. *Woollaston*, which are now under view, should not in common Equity, be equally admitted, with regard to the few Mysteries in revealed Religion. If the God of infinite Truth hath plainly revealed them; is not his Veracity as firm a Bottom as any

* *i.e.* The natural Affection, and provident Care of the Offspring.

other Self-evident Proposition? Doth it agree then with common Sense to repudiate the revealed Mystery, which doth not imply a Contradiction, nor is inconsistent with any other known Truth; to reject it I say for this Reason, *viz.* Because the humane Mind cannot explain the Modus of it, or account for the Manner how it is? For if this could be done, it would be no more a Mystery. Is there any Reason for this? Is it not against common Equity; when at the same time we are all conscious of so many Mysteries in Philosophy, which we are constrained to resolve at last, into the infinite Powers of a Deity; altho' the Subjects of Philosophical Mysteries are familiar to us? Why then should not the same Allowance be made in a revealed Mystery, when the very Subject to which it relates is incomprehensible? If in a Philosophical Mystery, of the Truth of which we are conscious; it must not be pleaded that it is impossible, until we can know all the Powers of the infinite Being, *i. e.* until we our selves are Infinite: Why not likewise in the other Case?

I have insisted the longer upon this third Remark, that I might shew the ignorant and ridiculous Nonsense of the noisy Outcry against the few revealed Mysteries, which makes a good Part of that large Book, *Christianity as old as the Creation*; *viz.* merely because they are Mysteries; whilst

whilst at the same time, they who make the Out-ery, are constrained to admit of Philosophical Mysteries in so great Variety.

§ 9. Having thus remarked upon what Mr. *Woolaston* hath advanced, relating to the Prescience of the future Actions of intelligent free Agents; I proceed to represent his further Progress in attempting to establish the special Providence by the Light of common Reason. He goes on in a beautiful Manner; observing that many things may be brought to pass, by means of secret and sometimes sudden Influences on our Minds, or the Minds of other Men, whose Acts may affect us. Thus Deliverances from Dangers, Advantages and Successes may be brought about; as also Mischiefs by way of Punishment: New Views of Things raised, new Forces and Directions impress upon the Spirits, Passions exalted or abated, the Powers of the Mind enlivened or debilitated, or the Attention taken off; new Volitions, Designs, Measures, or a Cessation from Thinking: And thus many Things prevented that otherwise would happen, and many brought about that would not; without any Change or Suspension of the standing Laws of Nature. All which, he says, may be caused among other ways, by the Suggestion and Impulse, or other silent Communications, of some Spiritual Being, perhaps the Deity himself; in his Page 106. throughout; where he hath much more

more to this same Purpose. From all which, it is evident that this eminent Author could not be an Adversary to the Doctrine of the Divine Grace, as it is taught by all sober Christians.

He next affirms there not only may be, invisible Beings, superior in Nature to us, but that it is probable there are such; yea many Orders of them, rising in Dignity of Nature, and Amplitude of Power, one above another; which Spiritual Beings, may have corporeal Vehicles such as we have, but finer and invisible. And all of them Instruments of the Divine Providence. And thus far he hath proceeded in accounting for the Possibility of the Divine Providence; and all this in order to

His second Argument to prove the special Providence. Which is; by inferring, that being possible, then certainly it actually is; and necessarily must be.

§ 10. "Because God is a Being of perfect Reason. And if Men are treated according to Reason, they must be treated according to what they are; the Just, the Compassionate, as such; and the Vicious, Unjust, Cruel, according to what they are: And their several Cases must be taken, and considered as they are. Which cannot be done without such a Providence.

Page 110. Line 10." And it seems that eminent Author layed great Stress on the concluding force of this Argument; by his affirm-

affirming upon the Evidence of it —
“ That it is as certain, that there is a parti-
“ cular Providence, as that God is a Being
“ of perfect Reason. (*viz. ibid. and a few*
“ *Lines above*) And to allow that this may
“ be done, and yet say that it is not done,
“ implies a Blasphemy that creates Horror.
“ It is to charge the perfect Being, with one
“ of the greatest Imperfections; and to make
“ him not so much as a reasonable Being.”

Now altho’ the constant and particular
Interposal of God by the special Providence
must be allowed to be possible, “ Because
“ (as this Author observes) it is impossible
“ for any thing whose Existence flows from
“ him, ever to grow so far out of his reach,
“ or to be so emancipated from him,” as that
“ he may not so interpose at his own Plea-
sure. Yet with due Submission, I humbly
conceive that this Argument on which he
doth rely so much, is both a bold Way of
Reasoning; and falls very short of conclu-
ding the thing to be proved.

First, I say, this Way of Reasoning is bold,
beyond the due Line of an Imperfect Crea-
ture. How little is it that we know of the
incomprehensible Being? and how little of
the Reasons that may determine infinite
Wisdom? When we observe his Doings,
we may well, yea we ought to conclude,
that they are reasonable; because they are
his Doings. But on the other hand, when
we conceive a thing to be reasonable, or the
con-

contrary seems to us to be unreasonable; it doth not become weak Man, in this Case to reason thus; that if God is reasonable, he must do so; or that he would act against Reason if he did otherways. No; it is sufficient for us to know, what is reasonable for *us* to do. But God may see it infinitely reasonable for himself to do, what we ignorantly think is otherways. No *finite* Being can comprehend all the Reasons of his Conduct.

But Secondly, As this Reasoning is too bold; so it falls short of concluding the thing to be proved. The Argument runs thus: "If Men are treated according to Reason, they must be treated according to what they are: The Just, the Compassionate, as such: The Vicious, Unjust, Cruel, according to what they are: Which cannot be done without the particular Providence." Now it is to be remembered that the Subject we are upon, is the Exercise of a special Providence *in this Life*. And if all this can be done without it, this Argument plainly falls.

And why may not the Vicious be treated in this Life as what they are, by their being abandoned of all special Divine Care, and left to the Course of common Providence? Do they deserve better? Are they worthy of the more special Divine Care of the particular Providence? Or is it necessary that the special Providence should in this Life,

be incessantly exerted in their Punishment? And that otherways they cannot be treated as what they are? Here then we have one Part of Mankind, and I suppose it will be allowed to be far the greatest Part, that may be deservedly, and that I'm sure is *reasonably*, excluded from all share of the more special Divine Care by the particular Providence; even because they are treated *according to what they are*.

But tho' this cannot be confuted by the Light of common Reason, with respect to the greater Part of Mankind: Yet what is to be said with regard to the Innocent, the Just, the Compassionate? However few they may be, yet are not they to be treated, as what they are? And how can this be done without the particular Providence? I answer that as there is more than a *perhaps*, that they are few indeed, in the Divine View: So in the Rigour of strict Justice, and abstracting from the Gospel *εὐαγγέλιον*, *i. e.* the favourable and clement Mitigation of strict Rigour, by the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour, there are none such absolutely Innocent, Just, &c. No not one alive. And withal, this *εὐαγγέλιον*, this Interpretation of Clemency, is only manifested by Revelation. The Light of common Reason could never have discovered it. Is that Man alive who can plead his absolute Integrity with God, or challenge his Right and Title in the strict Rigour of Justice, to the
special

special favourable Care of the particular Divine Providence; and say, if it is denied him by God, that he is not treated as what he is? *i. e.* as he ought to be. Now that the Light of common Reason has nothing to plead upon the Score of this revealed ~~inference~~, this Interpretation of Clemency, is evident. And consequently this whole Argument falls to the Ground, so far as it can be pleaded by the mere Light of common Reason.

But further, The special Providence of which we are treating, is only with respect to the Occurrences in this Life. It is only concerning the Administration of Providence in this World; because it is in this World that it is to be a Principle of moral Duty, and therefore it is in this Life, that the Evidence of it is needful. And where is the Philosopher that will affirm, that any Evidence of this particular Providence, in the respective Administration of it, with regard to the Virtuous and the Vitious, by treating them as what they are (*i. e.* either Virtuous or Vitious) is to be drawn from *Observation* of the Occurrences in this Life? And if the sharpest Eye of a Philosopher cannot in this Life perceive such Discrimination in the Conduct of Providence; must not the Philosopher thence be convinced that his Reasoning is against Fact, so far as relates to the observable Occurrences of this Life? But dares he Blasphemously to

infer from this, that the Divine Conduct is unreasonable? Or that the *infinitely perfect*, is not so much as a *reasonable* Being? Were it not more like a Philosopher, to confess, that the Topic which the Light of common Reason affords him, is Un sufficient? Or at least, that it fails him, so far as relates to the Conduct of Divine Providence observable in this Life, concerning which the present Question only is. And this is, in other Words; that it cannot serve him as a concluding Argument for the special Providence in this World, so long as he lives. And so I may proceed to a third of those Doctrines, that are chief Springs of moral Duty. But because of their mutual Relation, and Affinity, and for Brevity sake, I shall join two of them together.

C H A P. V.

The Immortality of the Soul; and the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, after this Life is ended; are Truths of which every Man, is not capable, of himself; to attain the Knowledge and Conviction; by the mere Light of common Reason.

§ 1. **A**S I enter upon this important Subject, I desire, that three Things may be observed.

First, That the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the mortal Body, and its Reunion with the Soul, as well as the Doctrine of the solemn Day of Judgment, when all the Race of Mankind shall be finally Awarded, to their respective eternal Felicity, or Misery; are both of them Doctrines of mere Revelation; which the *Light of common Reason* could never have discovered. And consequently it doth not afford the Motives to moral Duty which do solely spring from these Doctrines. The *Light of common Reason* can afford no Pretence of expecting, that the reintegrated Man, of Soul and Body, in one Person, is to undergo a future State of Reward or Punishment: Or that there shall be any such solemn Manifestation of the Equity of the Divine Providence and Conduct to all the World.

And seeing Man is by his Nature a Creature compounded of Soul and Body, united in one Person individual ; and all Mankind in our present State are Mortal : It is therefore obvious, that the Perfection and Felicity of our humane Nature, can never be absolute and complete otherwise, than in the redintegrated State ; *i. e.* If Soul and Body are not re-united, and jointly partaking of that Happiness and Perfection whereof both Soul and Body are capable, as united. And consequently that the Light of common Reason, which teacheth nothing relating to this Redintegration of the humane Nature, is plainly *Insufficient* to the most important Purposes of humane Comfort under the certain Conviction of our Mortality.

A *Second* Observation is, That whatever the Evidence is, which the Arguments for proving the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Reward and Punishment, may carry in them ; yet it is certain, they did not render the best and most refined Philosophers themselves, at absolute Certainty, and free of Doubtfulness and Perplexing, Anxiety concerning the Truth of them. To evince this, it may serve to give Instance in the few that are deservedly most Celebrated.

Of the *Greeks*, I shall join *Socrates* and *Plato* together, because it is from *Plato* assenting to his Master *Socrates*, that we have his Masters Sentiments testified, *viz.*
“ in

in his *Apolog. Socr.* “ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανέμεναι,
 “ὕμιν βιωσόμενοις; ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ αὐ-
 “τον, πρᾶγμα αἰσῆλον παντὶ πλην ἢ τῷ θεῷ. I am
 “now a dying, ye are to live, but to which
 “of us, it shall be best, is uncertain to all, ex-
 “cepting God alone.” Thereby testifying
 his Doubtfulness of any future Reward to
 the Virtuous. So did *Plato*, and so did *Ci-
 cero* understand him. *Cicero, Tusc. Quest.
 Lib. 1.* Hath this Remark on the dying
 Words of *Socrates*. “*Sed suum, illud, Nihil*
 “*ut affirmet; tenet ad extremum* — And
 “translating the last Words of *Socrates* (af-
 “ter is uncertain to all, excepting God alone)
 “he subjoins, *hominem autem scire arbitror*
 “*neminem*; i. e. To the very last he retain-
 “ed his Doubtfulness, affirming that no Man
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 and again in *Apol. Socr.* giving the last
 Words of *Socrates* to his Friends in their
 last Visit; he represents him expressing the
 same Doubtfulness, tho’ he had told them
 he had great Hope, yet he added, *If the*
things that are told us, (τα λεγόμενα) are true.
(ὡς ὅρα ἐγὼ εἰσι πάντες οἱ τεθνεώτες) viz. *that all*
who are dead, live there.

And altho’ a future State of Immortality
 was the darling Prospect of *Cicero*; inso-
 much that he says (*de Senectute*) *Quod si in*
hoc erro, quod animos hominum Immortales
credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem,
quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. And
 again, (in *Tusc. Quest. L. 1.*) *Sed hic, nemo de*

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quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. And
 again, (in *Tusc. Quest. L. 1.*) *Sed hic, nemo de*

" *Immortalitate depellet* ; i. e. But if I err
 " in believing the Immortality of the Soul,
 " I err willingly, nor whilst I live, shall that
 " Error wherein I delight, be wrested from
 " me——But as to this, the Immortality of
 " the Soul, none shall drive me from it."
 Yet on the same Subject ; in *Tusc. Quest.*
Lib. I. Sect. 16. He says——*Probabilia con-*
jectura sequens ; ultra enim quo progrediar
non habeo, quam ut verisimilia videam. Cer-
ta dicent ij, qui et percipi ea posse dicunt.
 And again ; (*ibid*) *in his est enim aliqua ob-*
scuritas. And again. *Nescio quomodo, dum*
lego, assentior ; cum posui Librum, & me-
cum de Immortalitate animarum capi cogi-
tare, assentio omnis elabitur. And again,
 with regard to this same Question, whether
 the Soul is Mortal or Immortal? *Harum*
Sententiarum qua vera sit, Deus aliquis vi-
derit ; qua verisimilia, magna Questio est ;
 i. e. " Following probable Conjectures ; how
 " to advance further, than Probability, I
 " cannot tell ; which of the Opinions is most
 " true God knows ; which is the most pro-
 " bable, is a great Question. Let those be
 " positive who can ; for in those things there
 " is some Obscurity. I know not how it is,
 " whilst I read, I assent ; when I have laid
 " aside the Book, and begin to meditate
 " again upon the Immortality of the Soul,
 " all the Assent doth slide away." And *Se-*
neca treating on the Immortality of the
 Soul (*Epist. 102.*) sayeth ; *Credebam facile*
Opinion-

Opinionibus magnorum virorum rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium; i. e. "I easily believed the Opinions of great Men, rather promising, than proving this "delightful Hope."

These among other Passages, in the Writings of the most celebrated Masters of moral Science both of *Greece* and *Rome*, have been often remarked by Christian Authors, both Ancient and Modern; and they clearly evince, as I have said, that what ever Evidence the Arguments for proving the Truths under our view, may carry in them; yet they did not render the best and most refined Philosophers themselves, at absolute Certainty, and free of all Doubt and perplexing Anxiety about them. They could not discern in them, any Scientific Proof. And if it was thus with those of greatest Learning and Probity; it is easy to judge of the Case of the illiterate Multitude; especially when at the same time, there were not wanting Philosophers who denied and disputed against those great and desirable Truths. However, the Case of the Illiterate, as distinguished from the few of Learning and Probity, is sufficient to serve all the Purpose at which I aim.

Can it be said, that even in this Situation, there was no need of any further Light? Or can the Deists have the Face to deny, that the great Truths under view, are the great Springs of moral Duty? Or is the
Pene-

Penetration of our modern Deists, not only the Philosophers, but even the Mob of them, so far beyond the reach of those ancient Sages, whom the World doth still so much, and so deservedly admire? The difference betwixt those ancient, and our modern, Deists is very great. They were Men not only of great Wisdom and Learning, but of great Probity and Candor. They had it sincerely at Heart, to improve the moral System for the good of Mankind, as well as the satisfying of their own Mind. And in order to this, they imployed their Learning and all their Force of Spirit, to establish the great Foundations and Springs of moral Duty, as far as the Light of common Reason did assist. Yet after all their strenuous Efforts, we see they candidly owned their Incapacity to do it in a Scientific Way, groaning under the want of more Light. And at the same time, they were tenacious of those useful Truths, tho' they could only perceive propable and moral Certainty of them: Lamenting the Weakness of their Reason, the Ignorance and Darkness of their Minds, praying, and exhorting to pray, to the Deity for more Light, as was before observed in *Pythagoras*, and *Plato*, and *Simplicius's* Commentary upon *Epicletus*. (Chap. 3. § 4.) But on the contrary, our modern Deists, tho' far inferior to them in Learning and Penetration, do, in mere contempt of *that* further Light by Revelation,

tion, which they so much wanted, and is now afforded, bend all their combined Force, to cry up, and magnify the Light of common Reason, as perfectly sufficient of it self to teach and direct every Man, with respect to every thing he is to know, believe, and practise. It cannot be imagined that the more learned of them, are insensible of the Weakness of this Light of Nature in the present State of Mankind; which gives reason to believe, from such Conduct, that they are equally Enemies unto, and have formed a Design to root out, all Religion both Natural and Revealed. And if they could prevail to have Revelation abandoned, we should soon see the Mask taken off; and all the Principles and Branches of moral Philosophy that stand in the way of those licentious Principles (which now are only vented in the Clubs) as much laught at, and battered by them, as Revelation is at present. At least we're sure, that no Principle of moral Duty could escape, that is not built on Demonstration. The *Pagan* and *Turkish* Plurality of Wives, is but a Trifle in comparison of the Train of Licentiousness that would soon take place.

§ 2. A *Third* Observation I desire to be made, is this: That altho' the Doctrins of the Immortality of the Soul, and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, should want the demonstrative Evidence of Scientific Proof: Yet there is such moral Evidence

dence of every one of them, even abstracting from Revelation, tho' not without some Obscurity, as the Minds that have been in any degree cultivated, may draw therefrom a good Foundation of comfortable Hope to the Virtuous, and may justly give Terror to the Vitious.

The universal Tradition hath been no less for these Truths, than for the Existence of a Deity. As *Cicero* expresseth it, *Permanere animos arbitramur, Consensu Nationum omnium*; i. e. *We agree with the Consent of all Nations, that the Soul survives the Body.* And again, *Tusc. Quest. L. i. & primum quidem omni antiquitate.* i. e. *Before the oldest Authors extant.* But because this Tradition owes its Original to the Instruction of the first common Parents of Mankind, who had conversed with God, and thereby is at least near of Kin to Revelation, or rather a kind of Revelation it self, and from the same Fountain Head, as shall be shown hereafter. Therefore here I only point to such other probable Topics, as not only may be, and have been improved by the Light of common Reason; but are also suggested by the Light of Nature, which the universal Tradition is not. Such as; The necessary Desire of Immortality implanted in the very Nature of Man, if he is not quite abandoned to Debauchery, and thereby frightened with the Terrors of future Punishment. And even when this natural
Desire

Desire is thereby changed into Terror, these unavoidable Apprehensions, do concur with the natural Desire of those that are not so abandoned ; to create the Probability: For it cannot be imagined that God hath given Appetites, and natural Desires that are never to be satisfied, and have no Objects to answer them ; or unavoidable Apprehensions of what must never happen. Again, Man is naturally an accountable Being and capable of being tried and judged. Creatures that act by Instinct and are not capable of any moral Rule, can never be accountable for their Actions ; But Man has a Principle of Freedom, and tho' he had no other more perfect Rule than his weak and uncultivated Reason ; yet this renders him, in many things, capable of moral Good and Evil: And since all the moral Difference of his Actions consists in the right Use or Abuse of his Faculties ; it is highly reasonable to expect that the Author of his Being who bestowed his Faculties, will call him to account. And then again further ; The natural Conscience that is in every Man, as an inward Judge, by which he accuseth ; and acquits, or condemns himself: And is attended with a suitable, either hope of Reward, or fear of Punishment, is a Topic of great Force. For who can think that the infinitely wise Creator should have so framed the humane Mind, as to be Self-convicted, and necessarily to pass a Judgment
on

on it self, a Sentence that is to be just and true for ever; and yet never be ratified and confirmed? Withal, were it not absurd to imagine that a God of infinite Wisdom, should have placed rational Beings, endow'd with such excellent Faculties, to be the Inhabitants of this Globe, and manifestly fitted this Part of the Creation, for their Accomodation; and all this only to perpetuate a Succession of short lived Mortals, to pass a Life of Vanity and Vexation, where the Grievs exceed the Pleasures, and the Desires exceed the Enjoyments; and then to be turned into Nothing for ever.

Such Topics as these have been happily improved as Motives to Virtue by Philosophers of Wisdom and Probity. But at the same time, there is not one among a hundred of uncultivated Mankind, of Capacity (of themselves) to observe them, and duly to weigh their Force, and draw a full Conviction from them. And the few that have this Capacity, do generally find other importunate Business, or Amusement, to entertain their Thoughts.

And now having made these three Observations; because the Men with whom we dispute do still demand of us, to give them Demonstration, and nothing less can please them, than a Scientific Evidence; and at the same time set up for Masters of moral Science, and pretend to perfect Systems of it. Yea that every Man has a System of it;

it, perfectly sufficient for himself, by the Light of common Reason. The Question therefore that falls naturally now to be considered ; is this,

How far the great Truths, now under view, do admit of Demonstration ? And how far every Man is capable to perform this Scientific Proof ; or to attain this Evidence and Conviction, by the Light of common Reason ?

§ 3. Of those Proofs suggested by the Light of common Reason, which lay claim to demonstrate the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments ; and consequently that the Soul doth not cease to exist, when this mortal Life doth end ; the first I shall name is this : That the Justice and Goodness of God, which are essential and moral Divine Attributes, and the Manifestation of them do necessarily require an evident Discrimination to be made, between the Virtuous and the Vicious, with regard to their respective moral Behaviour. But from all the Occurrences in this Life, there is no Evidence of such Discrimination. Therefore there is certainly a future State, in which this necessary Discrimination shall be manifest. And the innumerable Instances of manifest Oppression, in great Variety, which the more eminently Virtuous do undergo, whilst the more eminently Vicious do prosper and flourish ; being such

Facts

Facts as cannot be disputed ; do plainly add to the Force of this Argument.

It cannot be denied that this Argument from the Divine Justice, doth necessarily infer the future Punishment of the Vicious, especially the more atrociously Hainous of them. Tho' they will be the last to plead the Force of this Reasoning ; yet all their Art can never be able to eradicate the dread of it out of their Minds. The Probability, yea the very Possibility of it, must haunt them with great Degrees of Terror. And whoever is capable, deliberately to weigh the Nature, and Demands of Justice ; must yield to this Conviction. *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right ?* Is plainly a Dictate of the Light of common Reason. And to imagine a God that is all Mercy, and not infinitely Just ; is only to erect a fictitious Idol ; and is plainly contradictory to the Idea of an infinitely perfect Being.

But then ; though the Argument now under view, is thus far conclusive ; viz. on the one side, as it regards the Vicious, especially those who are more outrageously Wicked ; yet when it is considered on the other side, as it respects the Virtuous and Innocent ; even those of them that are more eminently so ; and with regard to any Title they may have to a future State of Felicity and Reward ; so far as the Light of common Reason can discover ; this Argument I say, considered on this side, doth afford no such concluding Force.

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Because abstracting from the Gospel *ἐπιεικεια* *i. e.* the Interpretation of Clemency, which I formerly mentioned (in § 10. *Chap.* 4.) abstracting, I say, from the Divine Promises by Revelation, and that favourable Mitigation of strict Rigour by the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour, which is only thereby manifested; there are truly none who are absolutely Innocent, Just and Virtuous. *No not one* alive. How this hath come to pass? Seeing it is justly to be presumed, that Men could never originally, have proceeded from the Hands of a Creator of infinite Goodness in a State so corrupted and vicious; is another Question, which likewise can only be resolved by Revelation. But that thus it is, in the present State of Mankind, is past all Question. There is no Man of common Sense, who is not conscious of it: *For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God*: And there is none alive, who can plead his absolute Integrity with God, and challenge his Title to the reward of the Virtuous, in the strict Rigour of Justice; or say, if it is denied him by God, that he is not duly treated. This indeed would be the *Papish* Doctrine of Merit, *De Condigno*, with a Witness. I know there are, who foolishly imagine that Man did originally proceed from the Hands of the Creator, in the same State of Infirmary and Corruption, in which all Mortals do now wrestle; that this is the Doctrine

of the modern Deists ; that the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* doth affirm it (*Chap. 14. Pag. 375, 385, 386 389, 390.*) But to affirm that such corrupted Streams could originally flow from the Fountain of infinite Purity ; that God could have created Man, in such a State of Sinfulness, Infirmary, and Misery ; is such a blasphemous Impeachment of the infinitely perfect Being, as gives Horror to every considerate and impartial Mind, that can give Scope to true Free-thinking. Let those who do make bold in this manner, think of it : For it is at their highest Peril. Withal, it can scarcely be conceived that any who truly believe a Deity can harbour a Thought of him, so monstrously shocking. For in the plain Consequences of it, it makes him the Author of all the moral Evil upon Earth, as well as all the miserable Infelicities that do inseparably attend it ; by framing Creatures of such natural Infirmary, that this moral Evil is unavoidable.

I am well aware that many great Men, and Authors highly eminent, have considered the Argument, now under our Examination, as a Scientific Proof of the future State of Rewards, as well as Punishments ; among others the learned and accurate Dr. Samuel Clarke (*In his Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, Prop. iii.*) expressly affirms it. I have assigned the Reason, why I am constrained to differ : And
I can-

I cannot forbear to think it evidently solid, and convincing. And surely it could proceed from no other Cause but the very Reason I have given ; that the ancient Philosophers of so great Probity and Learning, who had the same Argument under their view, did notwithstanding falter with regard to their Conviction of the Certainty of this future State of Felicity. They were sensible of their own Infirmities ; of the State of universal Corruption ; they expressly own their Sense of it, they were conscious that they had no claim, to absolute Innocence, to perfect Integrity, and Virtue ; nor consequently to the future Reward ; being destitute of that Light of Revelation which alone doth make the Discovery of those desirable Terms of Salvation, that are offered by God to sinful Man, through the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour : And thereby affording the Promises and the Aids of Grace to enable weak Man to conquer his Infirmities ; and also mitigating the Rigour of strict Justice, and so affording the merciful, and certain Prospect of everlasting Felicity. Infomuch that without the Divine Revelation, there is not any absolute Evidence or Foundation even for that short Creed of the Author to the *Hebr.* (*Chap. 11. V. 6.*) *But without Faith it is impossible to please God ; For he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of all that diligently seek him.* No Wonder then,

that those antient Sages,¹ who were only groping their Way in the dim Light of common Reason, and wanted that Light of Revelation, which we so happily enjoy, in the just Sense of their own natural Infirmary and Corruption; notwithstanding all the force which the Argument drawn from the essential Divine Attributes doth carry; did yet hesitate and stagger, without the certain Conviction of a future State of eternal Felicity. They had the Argument; they faintly pleaded it; their Penetration to espy a necessary Conclusion, was nothing short of any in our Age.

And is it not a great Abatement of the Weight of this Argument, that so far as the Light of common Reason goeth, the best and most Virtuous, being Imperfect, and more or less Criminal and Corrupted, have no absolute Certainty of any After-reward and Felicity; but rather an anxious Fear from the conscious Sense of their own manifold Failings and Demerit? And that this certain Prospect of Reward is wanting to allure and reclaim the Vitious? And is not this enough to serve my Purpose? Especially seeing this is the Case, not only with regard to the illiterate Multitude; but even with respect to the most refined and sublime Philosophers. And shall Men after all, pretend that the Light of Revelation is not necessary? at least this Argument stands not in the way of that Necessity.

§ 4. I proceed to consider another of the Arguments that are drawn from the Light of common Reason, to demonstrate the Immortality of the Soul. Namely, that the Soul is Immaterial, and therefore Immortal. Because the ceasing of the animal Life by our temporal Death, is nothing else, but the dissolution of the Body by the separation of its Parts. And the Soul being Immaterial, is thereby Indivisible, or Indiscerpible, having no Parts that can be separated; and so Immortal. This is called the *Cartesian* Argument, tho' we are sure, it is as old as the times of *Cicero*; who expressly pleads it. *Tusc. Quest. L. 1. Nec discerpi, nec distrabi potest. nec interire igitur.* Which is the same Argument with equal Force, and greater Eloquence. And some of the ancient Christian Authors, as well as of the School Men have pleaded in much the same Manner.

This hath been thought a plain and easy Way of Proof, suited even to the Capacity of the Vulgar. And indeed, that the Soul is an Immaterial Substance, and therefore hath no Parts that can be separated: That Matter or Body, however Figured or Modified, is absolutely incapable to Think, or Reason; is a Truth that admits of Demonstration; and is unanswerably demonstrated by the above mentioned Dr. *Clarke* in his Letter to Mr. *Dodwell*; and his said Demonstration is absolutely cleared and vindicated in the Defences thereof; to which

for Brevity sake, I refer the Reader. And this being demonstratively evident, it doth necessarily follow, that the Soul cannot die in the manner that our Body doth. And from this again, it doth no less evidently follow, that the death of the Soul is no ways necessary upon the Dissolution of the Body, or because the Body dies. And if the *Cartesians*, and Dr. *Clarke* with them, did confine their Demonstration to prove only thus far; the Conclusion would indeed be evident. This much the Argument doth plainly prove; but it cannot be stretched further.

Now tho' there were nothing else to convince Mankind of the Inbecillity of humane Reason, and how apt the learned Philosophers themselves are to be imposed on, if they will consider it as their only Guide; Yet the Experience which this *Cartesian* Argument hath afforded, might well serve to do it. For it may astonish us to observe, even when it was over stretched, how universally, and how long, it was fondly relied on, as Demonstration, by those of greatest Learning, throughout the *European* Nations, even in a time when Learning flourished to the highest Pitch; we are sure at least of this, because we are living Witnesses of it.

It was Lucky that a Christian first detected this. For otherwise it would have been called a *pious Fraud*. It was the Philosophical

phical Mystic Monf. *Poiret*, by reasoning in manner following. (*Divine Oecon. Vol. 1. Chap. 10.*) viz. "When we ask whether the Soul be Immortal? The Question is not, whether it Desolves, or Evaporates, or no? But whether, or no, its Life, or Thought, perpetually subsists, without ever ceasing? To have Parts is only a Property of Body. And tho' being a Spirit, it hath no Parts, and therefore can have no dissolution or separation of Parts: Yet the perpetual Subsistence of it, can never follow from this; viz. Because a certain corporeal Property, the dissolution of Parts, which we call Death, tho' it befall the Body, cannot affect the Soul. Indeed if nothing could be called Death, but the being divided into Parts, such Reasoning would be solid. But tho' the Soul cannot die in this Manner: Yet the Question is, whether it may cease to Exist, to Think, or from all capacity of Thinking? And so to die in that Manner, *i. e.* Cease to live as a Spirit liveth. What Relation has this to a Property peculiar to Bodies? For at this rate, one may prove that the Soul has no *Life*, by arguing thus. A certain corporeal Property, viz. the Motion of the Blood and animal Spirits, so and so disposed; is called Life. But this Property, tho' it be in the Body, is not in the Soul: Therefore the Soul has no life. And if this Proof be good

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“for nothing; the other is no more. It is
“only the Sophism which *Logicians* call *Ignoratio Elenchi*. And one might as well
“pretend to prove that the Soul is Immortal, because it is not Round, Triangular, or
“Square.”

That same Author doth well observe, that the solid Proofs of the Immortality of the Soul, do not depend on comparing it with things of a different Nature; unless they be compared in Attributes common to both, As for Instance; Existence which the Body hath, as well as the Soul. And from this a Proof of the Immortality of the Soul may be drawn, in this manner: *viz.* Tho’ the Body dies, when its Parts that were formerly united, are dissolved; yet its Nature and Substance do always exist: It ceaseth not to be still an existing Substance, and doth not become a Nothing; however its Parts may be dispersed, or collected. Therefore the Soul, tho’ it may be severed from the Body, to which it is united, and its Thoughts no longer collected in the Brain, nor exerted in the same manner as when it is united to the Body; yet doth not cease to *be*, as to the Existence of its Nature and Substance; *i. e.* to be a Thinking Substance: Nor does it become a Nothing.

This is a more solid Proof of the Immortality of the Soul. And the Evidence of it lieth in this Truth; *viz.* That Things which do exist, cannot lose their Existence; or fall
again

again into Nothing. For, Creatures cannot annihilate, or destroy their own Being. Nor can any created Things destroy or annihilate the Being of other Things. And we cannot imagine that God will destroy the Being of his Creatures: Because they owe their Being to his good Pleasure; and as nothing in his good Pleasure deserves to be destroyed: So he cannot be pleased to destroy his good Pleasure; for this would be a Contradiction. In a Word, *Simple Existence, and mere useful Faculties, or essential Properties*; they are Images of the *Divine Being and Perfections*; and therefore being in themselves *harmless* in their respective Degrees of Reality and Perfection; they can never displease the infinitely wise Author of them, from the time he first *saw that they were good*, to all Eternity: Altho' the *free* intelligent Being that doth abuse them by Immorality, shall be punished. They cannot alter of themselves: No created Power can change them: And their Author the All-perfect Being is unchangeable.

There are other Evidences of this Truth, That Things which do exist, cannot lose their Existence, or fall into Nothing. But these I have briefly mentioned may suffice.

Now, altho' this Proof here given of the Immortality of the Soul when join'd to the Demonstration of its Immateriality shall be considered as truly Demonstrative. Yet no Body will imagine, that the illiterate Multitude

itude, is capable, of themselves, by the mere Light of that share of common Reason which they enjoy, to form these Demonstrations, or even to attain the Evidence and Conviction they afford. As to that Truth upon which the Evidence of the Argument now brought, doth depend: Namely, That Things which do exist, cannot lose their Existence, or fall again into Nothing: It would take much Time and Pains of a Philosopher to convince the Illiterate, that the Being or Matter of the Fewel consumed in their Fire; or of the Liquor when a Gallon is boil'd into half a Pint, is not mostly destroyed and annihilated. And altho' there are sundry other Theoretic Proofs that do really demonstrate the Immortality of the Soul, which I here omit for Brevity sake. Yet they are all of a Nature so Abstracted and Metaphysical, that it is not possible to bring them down to the Capacity of the great Bulk of uncultivated Mankind. And therefore here, as I before did, when treating of the Existence of a Deity; I again invite the *Author of Christianity as old, &c.* Or any Deist for him, to confute my Assertion: Which is, That every Man cannot of himself, by the mere Light of common Reason, attain the certain Knowledge and Conviction, of the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards as well as Punishments; those Truths which are the concurring great Springs and necessary Foundations

dations of moral Duty : To confute me, I say, by producing any one such easy Proof as the Illiterate can frame. For here also, it is obvious, that I cannot be confuted other ways.

The Manner of Worship that will surely be acceptable to God, cannot be discovered by the mere Light of common Reason, with any Certainty.

§ 5. That religious Worship is an essential Part of moral Duty. That some Worship is due by the intelligent Creature to the infinite Creator, will be refused by none who own a Deity. And the Light of Nature, as well as revealed Religion, doth likewise teach, that this is chiefly to be, by the internal Acts of the intelligent Mind, By Love, Gratitude, Admiration, a holy Awe, and Reverence, Submission to his Will, Trust and humble Dependance, mental Adoration ; and the Imitation of his moral Attributes, of Justice, Mercy, Benevolence to Mankind, &c. And all this, so far as the Nature and Perfections of God are manifested by the Light of Reason. But then, the Knowledge that Mankind hath of the infinite Nature, Attributes, and Perfections of God, in our present State, is very Imperfect and Defective. And therefore he who alone perfectly knows himself and his own Mind, can himself only, make such further Discoveries of himself, and of this
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his Mind, as in our imperfect State, we are not-able of our selves to discover. The Knowledge of him, and of his Mind, which the most perfect of intelligent Beings have, may be enlarged, accordingly as he is pleased to communicate it to them; and their Duty will thereby become enlarged; and all this must be conducive to the further Perfection of their Nature. And shall poor imperfect Man alone, be the only intelligent Being, that is incapable of this Benefit by his Maker? Tho' he has the greatest need of it. Is it possible any Body can think this is not against the Light of common Reason? And yet if God can enlarge our Duty, by further enlarging the Knowledge of himself and of his Will, or Mind; the whole Design and Scheme of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, doth fall. Because his perfect Rule may be this way enlarged, as God thinks fit. This is by the way.

But to proceed, Secondly; Besides the internal Adoration, and other Acts of the Mind, wherein the Worship of God doth indeed chiefly consist: Hath not the common Sense of Mankind always taught, and doth it not still teach; that some external Adoration and Worship, is also necessary? We have Bodies as well as Souls: And is it not highly reasonable, that the Capacities and Faculties of these, should be joined with the internal Powers of the Mind, in the Worship of him who gave them? Doth not
he

he deserve that Tribute who framed them so useful to us? Did not the Man speak good Reason, who said, *I will praise thee, O God, with the best Member that I have?*

And further yet, Thirdly; God hath formed Man a social Creature, both for his Benefit and Delight. And this humane Nature so framed, doth naturally join in Societies, for their common good. And doth not the same intelligent Nature dictate, that this God of infinite Goodness, is jointly to be worshipped in the Societies of Men; that in the united Harmony, the Devotion of every Individual, may be thereby enlarged and enflamed? Are there not publick and common Mercies, and publick and common Calamities, dispensed by Providence? And common Needs and Exigencies respecting Societies? And do not these demand publick and common Applications to the Deity, of Thanksgiving, Deprecation, Prayer, and Supplication? Doth not the true Light of common Reason dictate all this? Let all who are not downright Atheists hearken to the common Sense of Mankind, and to the Voice of Reason in their own Mind; and they must assent to it. And at the same time it is obvious, that there cannot be publick or common Worship, without external Adoration. Indeed the Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* among other sneering Expressions that point to downright Atheism, sometimes testifies the slender Sense he has of

of Benefit by Prayer: Which hath made me drop this much of external Worship, as a Dictate of natural Reason.

But then, tho' all the Heathen World had always this Conviction: Yet how sadly were they blinded, as to the Manner of their Worship? Not to mention here their *Polytheism*, by multiplying the Objects of their religious Worship: All the instituted Worship of the *Gentile* Nations that were most polite, was such as all who have been instructed by Christianity, tho' supposed to be Infidels even under that Instruction, if they do but own a Deity, must likewise own, that it was unworthy of the infinitely perfect Being. And yet the Institutions were framed by their wisest Law-givers. However with all the pretended Improvements that were superadded, borrowed, and adopted from other polite Nations; they did all, at their best, produce nothing but Scenes of Contempt and Horror. And if these were so absurd, what an Infinity of odious Absurdities would have arisen, if every Man by his own Light of common Reason, had been the Framer for himself? Could it then be more wise, or more worthy of God? Was there no need of Revelation in this deplorable State?

Whatever our modern Deists may think, yet *Socrates* and *Plato*, the two Wisest of all the Ancients, and who made the best Improvement of the Light of common Reason,
of

of all the Heathen Philosophers, that have been before, or since their Times, were convinced of the need of Revelation, for this very End, of teaching such Manner of Worship as will surely be acceptable to God. Plato (in *Alcibiade* 2.) In his Account of a Conference betwixt *Socrates* and one of his Scholars; "represents *Socrates* advising
 "his Scholar to wait with Patience, till such
 "time as we can learn certainly, how to be-
 "have both towards God and Men. And
 "the Scholar answering, when will that Time
 "come? and who will teach us this? It
 "is one, says *Socrates*, who has now a Con-
 "cern for you. But as *Homer* relates that
 "*Minerva* took away the Mist from the
 "Eyes of *Diomedes*; so it is necessary that
 "the Mist which is now before your Mind,
 "be first taken away. The Scholar wish-
 "ing this to be soon; says, It is best then
 "to forbear offering any more Sacrifices till
 "the Person appears. And *Socrates* replies,
 "You judge very well; it will be much
 "safer so to do, than to run so great a Ha-
 "zard of offering Sacrifices, which you
 "know not whether they are acceptable to
 "God, or no." The learned Dr. S. Clarke
 hath translated, and remarked upon this
 whole Passage. *Evid. viæ* Of Nat. and Rev.
Rel. Prop. 6. *Seç.* 7. *Edit.* 6. *Pag.* 157, and 158.
 And again, Plato in *Phæd.* hath these Words,
 "εἰ μὴ τις δύναιτο ἀποελκόμενον καὶ ἐκινεσόμενον, ἐκ
 "βίβαιοτέρου ὀχήματος: ἢ λόγου θύει τινος διαπορευθῆναι.
 "i. e. Unless a Man could have still some
 "more

“ more sure and certain Conduct to carry
“ him through this Life, such as a Divine
“ Discovery of Truth would be.”

The first Part of my Treatise begins to swell upon me, and therefore, I must confine my self to treat only of two more of these Truths that are necessary to be known, as Springs and concurring Foundations of moral Duty, which the Light of common Reason doth not discover; viz.

The Certainty that God will forgive, and be reconciled unto Sinners. And the Assurance of the Divine Aid, in our wrestling State of Infirmary.

§ 6. And first of the Certainty that God will forgive, and be reconciled to penitent Sinners. It is obvious that without this, there is wanting a successful Motive to Virtue, and the most effectual Spur to religious Duty: 'Tis true, the Attributes of Goodness and Mercy, give Hope that the Deity is plausible, and may be reconciled. But on the other hand, the conscious Sense of Guilt, and the Consideration of infinite and strict Justice, do naturally raise anxious Solicitude and Doubtfulness. The Light of common Reason cannot fail to insinuate, that every Affront, and rebellious Abuse of the great Ruler of the Universe, exposeth to just Punishment, and doth demand some such Reparation, as may vindicate his awful and supreme Authority, and the Honour of his
Laws.

Laws. But the Light of common Reason affords nothing sufficient to dissipate this anxious Doubtfulness under this conscious Sense of Guilt. Whether God may pardon without some Satisfaction made: is a Question which we may well leave to the School-Men, Dr. *Twiss*, and the curious Wits that amuse themselves with needless Enquiries. But we are sure it can never be proved from the Divine Attributes, that God is obliged to pardon Sinners upon their Repentance; as Dr. *Clarke* doth well observe.

The Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* doth Himself affirm, that this cannot be inferred from the Divine Attributes. *Chap. 4. Page 141.* He says, "The Justice by which God is Righteous in all his Actions, and the Mercy by which he is Good and Beneficent, are infinite, and eternally Inherent in the Divine Nature. But these oblige not God, either to punish, or pardon, any further than his infinite Wisdom thinks fit." But we must not be surpris'd to find him Reasoning in plain Contradiction to this, when he has another Turn to serve. For the changing of Shapes in this manner is familiar to him. Accordingly *Chap. 14.* He pleads thus: "If it is only Sin and Rebellion that displeases God, he must therefore be pleas'd again, upon Repentance, turning from Sin, and a careful Obedience." To this I answer:

That Revelation doth indeed teach, that upon Repentance, turning from Sin, and a
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careful After-obedience, God is reconciled : But it is Revelation alone, can give us the Assurance of this ; which the Light of common Reason cannot do ; for by it alone, without Revelation, we could never have this Assurance. And at the same time it expressly teacheth, that this is owing to the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour, who hath made Atonement, and purchased Reconciliation upon these Terms, of Faith, Repentance, forsaking Sin, and a careful After-obedience ; and thereby rendred this way of appeasing the offended Deity, assuredly successful. For without this we could never have Assurance, that the Demands of infinite Justice, for former Rebellion are satisfied ; and the Affront done to Sovereign Authority, and the Honour of his Law, repaired. Especially because, first, The most perfect After-obedience is no more than was always due ; and therefore can make no Compensation, or Amends, for former Failures : And secondly, Because in the present corrupted State of Mankind, all the Obedience and best Performance of Duty is defective ; inasmuch that there are immoral Stains and Blemishes in our best Performances, which in strict Justice is still the contracting new Guilt. *The corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit, The bitter Fountain cannot send forth sweet Water, nor any clean Thing, proceed from the unclean.* Job 14. 4.

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But against all this, the Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* brings the Authority and Reasoning of two learned Authors, to support his own Pleading. *Chap. 14. Page 391, and 392. viz. Mr. Nye, and the celebrated Mr. Lock.*

“ Mr. Nye, of *Nat. & Rev. Rel. Pag. 85,*
“ 86, says; I affirm it is an Article of Na-
“ tural Religion, that Forgiveness does na-
“ turally follow Repentance. If God be a
“ merciful and benign Being, he will ac-
“ cept the Payment we are able to make,
“ and not insist on impossible Demands,
“ with his frail Bankrupt Creatures. No
“ generous Man but will forgive his Ene-
“ my, much more his Child, if he disap-
“ proves the Wrong he has done, is really
“ grieved for it, and desires to make amends,
“ even by suffering for the Honour of the Per-
“ son injured. How much more shall God for-
“ give all Persons thus disposed and reform-
“ ed? Since there is no Generosity in Man,
“ but what is, with his Nature, infused into
“ him, by God.

“ Not only Mercy, but Wisdom will ef-
“ fectually dispose God to forgive the Peni-
“ tent. Because the Creature reformed by
“ Penitence, is such as it ought to be, and
“ such as God willeth it: Which being so,
“ it cannot be Wisdom in God, to afflict
“ Unnecessarily. 'Tis not Justice, but Rage,
“ to punish where the Person is already
“ mended. When we argue thus, from any

“ of the known, and certain Attributes of
“ God, we are as sure of the Conclusion,
“ as if the thing was to be discerned by
“ Sense : Since no sensible Thing is more
“ certain, than the Attributes of God.”

Mr. *Lock Reasonableness of Christianity*,
Page 255, 256, says, “ God had by the
“ Light of Reason, revealed to all Mankind,
“ who would make use of that Light, that
“ he was Good and Merciful. The same
“ Spark of the Divine Nature, and Know-
“ ledge in Man, which making him a Man,
“ shewed him the Law he was under,
“ as a Man; shewed him also the way
“ of atoning the merciful, kind, compassi-
“ onate Author, and Father of Him and his
“ Being, when he had transgressed that Law.
“ He that made use of this Candle of the
“ Lord, so far as to find what was his Duty;
“ could not miss to find also the way to Re-
“ conciliation and Forgiveness, when he had
“ failed in his Duty.”

As there is nothing new, in all this Plead-
ing; so the two learned Authors, here in-
troduced, could not be ignorant of the true
State of this Question; it hath been so often
represented by Christian Writers, ancient
and modern, *English* and *Foreign*: Which
they ought here both of them to have no-
ticed and observed; as also to have given
the Christian Scheme of Reconciliation with
God, and the Reasoning that doth vindi-
cate it; and it became them in common
Equity,

Equity, to examine that Reasoning; and not to have rested on the Certainty of their Conclusions, till at least they had given the Christian *Plea*, a fair hearing. When they were directly pleading the Cause of Deists, upon the Question of the Assurance of Reconciliation and Forgiveness; it seems to be neither Candid, nor Just; to conclude against the plain and express Doctrine of Christianity, unheard, or not duly weighed; yea not so much as represented; as if it were inconsistent with Goodness, Mercy, Benignity, Generosity, Justice and Wisdom in the Deity: Without giving every unbiassed Mind, the Opportunity, to compare and judge, after weighing the Reasons on both Sides. I ought not indeed, to suspect these learned Gentlemen, had any unsincere Design, being professed Christians. Their fondness to advance their System of natural Religion, might transport them inadvertently, into this Conduct, without thinking of the hideous Consequences. And certainly the new unpresidented Manner, in which Infidelity doth now attack the Divine Revelation, is much owing to the unguarded Conduct of many late Christian Authors, in their Endeavours to carry and raise the System of natural Religion, far beyond what the Light of common Reason doth dictate. And it is obvious, that all the ingenious Reasoning of the modern Deists, is borrowed from the Invention of such Christian Au-

thors. And therefore, I think, I may use them with the greater Freedom.

In order to examine and confute what Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, hath advanced, with regard to the Assurance that God will forgive, and be reconciled to Sinners, as attainable by mere natural Reason, from the Consideration of the Divine Attributes. I shall first give a short View of the way of Reconciliation and of obtaining Pardon, which Revelation teacheth ; and make some Remarks that are necessary to the right understanding of the whole Matter in Question. And then apply it all, by answering every particular Sentence they have pleaded, as they are above cited by the Author of *Christianity as old*, &c. And I doubt not, under God, to make it evident, even to natural Reason, that the Beauty of the Divine Attributes is exceedingly more displayed, in the way that Revelation teacheth ; as well as *that* Assurance of Reconciliation and Forgiveness, hereby established, which the Light of common Reason, could never have attain'd.

§ 7. The Subject of which we are now treating, doth evidently consider Man as a Sinner, and thereby liable to Punishment, and at Enmity with God. And if I had only here to do, with Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, as being Christians ; and therefore agreeing with me, in some common Principles ; such as the Fall of Man from his original and primitive

mitive State of Innocency and Perfection, by which his Faculties are weakened, as well as corrupted by a natural Propensity to moral Evil: And that all Mankind, as descended from one Pair of common sinful and corrupted Parents, are naturally involved in this common Calamity. In this Case, I might directly proceed to the Task I have undertaken. The Origine and first Introduction of moral Evil into the World, as it relates to Mankind, is on these Facts to be accounted for. And the being agreed upon the original Cause of the Disease, upon common Principles; would facilitate the Debate relating to the only necessary way of Remedy. But the Controversy with the Deists is my Province: And the Debate with Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, is only Incidental; as they have fall'n in, to assist my Adversaries. And therefore at the same time that I dispute against them, I'm obliged to remember I am dealing with the Deists, who are their Adversaries as well as mine. However, I find that even as dealing with the Deists; it is not necessary for me, to enter upon, or to discuss the Questions relating to the Origine of moral Evil, and its universal Contagion with regard to fall'n Man: Because there is never one, who is truly Deist, but is conscious, that he hath himself offended God by Sin; and consequently hath been, more or less, liable to Punishment; and the present Question is only,

How to be assured of Reconciliation and Forgiveness?

And so, the way wherein I am to proceed, is partly chalked out already; *viz.* in *Chap.* III. § 2, § 3, and § 4. When I was taking a more particular View of the Light of common Reason; and Reasoning upon that view of it. For there it was briefly represented, that all Mankind is, more or less, sensible of the now corrupted State of our Nature; (whatever may be the first Rise, or Cause of this) that the humane Understanding is weak, the Will perverse, and inclined to Evil; our Passions unruly, and our Affections disordered; that as the Temptations to immoral Conduct are manifold; so all have, more or less, contracted vitious Habits. And tho' all are not alike sunk into Sensuality and Vice; yet there are none alive, who are not, more or less, sensible of this universal Malady. I have before represented, how the most celebrated Masters of moral Science have lamented this, making mention of the Diseases of the Soul; and the natural Tendency of Mankind to Licentious Vice, and the Aversion from the Strictness and Severity of Virtue, and that thereby Guiltiness hath overtaken all. I have shewn that there is no need of the Testimony and Authority of wise Men and Philosophers to prove this Truth; it is so palpably confirmed by the sensible Feeling and Experience of Mankind; that there are
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none who are capable to look into their own Breast and Conscience; and are not conscious of it. Which is all the Proof we can have that there is any such thing as Reason it self; unless it be by observing the Effects of it: And as I have before remarked, the woful Effects of this universal Corruption of our Nature, are no less palpable and conspicuous, than the very Effects of our common Reason. All Mankind are no less sensible and conscious of the one, than of the other. Insomuch that this is a way of Reasoning which no Deist can have the Face to contradict.

As to the Weakness of that common Reason which all Men bring into this World with them, it must be own'd to be Natural in our present State, in the strictest Sense; tho' the Deists will not admit that it is so, with regard to the universal corrupt Tendency to moral Evil: Affirming that this is only a contracted Infirmary and Corruption. But whether it be originally Natural, or only a contracted vitious Habit; yet if it is Universal, and hath become (as we speak) a second Nature; it is all one, as to the Purpose I have in view; and will serve it, with regard to the Deists, as well as to Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*. Because on all hands Man is considered, as having become corrupted; all his Faculties weak and disordered, under the Power and Dominion of unruly Passions, and Affections; over spread
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with Guiltiness ; and thereby become rather a Child of Satan than of God. And withal that this State of Infirmary and Guiltiness, is Universal.

Now tho' the weakened and dim Light of Reason still remaining, if carefully cultivated, might indeed discover to Man in this State, so much of the Knowledge of his Maker, and of his moral Duty in many Instances ; as to render him convicted of his Transgression and his Misery : Yet I have affirmed, and I do affirm with Christians, that it could neither afford him the certain Knowledge of the way of Atonement and Reconciliation ; nor of the Aid that is necessary to extricate himself from this State of Misery.

He might well perceive it was both his Duty and his Interest, to use his best Endeavour to obtain Reconciliation and Forgiveness ; and to have his Nature rectified. And it was natural for him to think that the God of infinite Mercy, is placable. And the best way of Reconciliation he could think of, was to repent, and to use his best Endeavour to amend, and return to Obedience. But withal, the Consideration of a Deity infinitely Just, as well as Merciful, could not fail to create some doubtfulness of his Acceptance ; and to render him anxious for such Assurance of it, as his Reason could not afford. Yet even under this Anxiety, it was still his Duty to do his best to
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please God; still wishing for the comfortable and encouraging Assurance of Acceptance. And altho' Daily Experience did convince him of his Weakness, and manifold reiterated Transgressions; and thereby of the need he hath both of Divine Help, and daily reiterated Forgiveness: Yet his Reason was unable to assure him, either of the one, or of the other.

In this wrestling State of universal Calamity; Revelation manifests, That the God of infinite Justice and Mercy, hath by infinite Wisdom, contrived and brought about the way of Reconciliation, in such manner, as not only to rescue the Guilty from the impending Justice, by an acceptable Atonement, on Condition of their Faith, Repentance, and Amendment: But also to save the awful Dignity and Regard due to the Supreme Authority and Law. In such a manner as doth equally at once display the infinite Goodness, Love, Compassion, and Justice of the Deity, with his infinite Hatred of immoral Guiltiness. And at the same time, by this Contrivance of infinite Wisdom; together with Reconciliation; there is also purchased and offered, the Divine Aid that is necessary for rescuing Man from the Power and Dominion of his corrupted Nature, his vicious Habits, and his unruly Passions and Affections. And all this, by the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour, who is both able, and willing to afford all
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the Help that is needful. This is the Christian Scheme, which Revelation doth manifest, and thereby establish the Assurance of Reconciliation and Forgiveness.

§ 8. I shall now make one or two Remarks; and then proceed, as I promised, to apply it all, by answering every particular Sentence of what is cited from Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, by the Author of *Christianity as old*, &c. as they are above transcribed.

And *First*, I remark, that Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, seem quite to over look, the natural Sense which Mankind have, of publick Justice; and of the awful Regard that is due to the Honour of publick Authority and Law. Are these to be lightly trampled on, and enormously despised, without some Satisfaction and Atonement? Must not the Honour of the Law be often vindicated, and Justice take place, even when the Person offended is willing to remit? The Impressions of Justice as well as Mercy, are equally connatural to the humane Mind. It is originally impregnated with them, by the Author of our Being, together with the Light of common Reason. These Impressions may well be numbred among the common Notions, and Self-evident Principles of Mankind; The very Idea we have of God, is of a Being infinitely Perfect; and this doth no less imply infinite Justice, than it doth infinite Goodness: And as I before have said, a God all of Mercy, and not like-

likewise of infinite Justice, is a fictitious Idol. Men may talk and write, in a manner that is Charming and Intoxicating, of infinite Goodness and Mercy, abstracting wholly from the Consideration of infinite Justice. But this is only popular Declamation and Amusement; and doth not favour of the Reasoning of Philosophers. There is an adorable Harmony as well as Consistency of the Divine Attributes, united in the Deity, and displayed in all their Effects relating to his Creatures, by an infinite Wisdom. He is the Sovereign Governour of the World: *And shall not the Judge of all the Earth do justly?* The humane Authority that is necessary to the subsisting of Societies, is an Image and Representation of the awful Authority of God; and it is this that renders the Affronting and Contempt of it, a piacular Guiltiness; *i. e.* such as demands some Reparation and Atonement; as being a Violation of what is Sacred, and a Defying of, and Rebellion against God. For it is this that makes Murder Piacular, because Man is created after God's Image.

The common Impressions of Justice, and of the awful Regard due to the Honour of Authority and Law, have always been visible among Nations, Barbarous and Civil. The noble and learned *Valerius Maximus*, who flourished in the Reign of *Tiberius*, records a shining Example of it. *Dictorum Factorumque Memorabilium Exempla.* Lib. 6
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One of the good Laws which *Zalucus* had instituted for the *Locrians*, was, that the Adulterer should have both his Eyes pull'd out : His own Sou was convicted of the Crime ; and no Intercession could move him, to abandon the Regard due to Justice without a signal Reparation ; *viz.* by causing first one of his own Eyes to be pull'd out ; and thereafter, one of his Son's Eyes. The Reflection of that eloquent Author upon this, is in these Words ; *Ita debitum Supplicij Modum legi reddidit, aequitatis admirabili temperamento, se inter Misericordem Patrem & justum Legislatorem partitus.* 'Tis not easy to translate this, without losing the Beauty of the Original. But the Sense is ; That in this admirable Manner, *Zaleucus* exemplified the Regard, that is equally due to Justice, and Fatherly Compassion.

Much of the Reasoning upon moral Principles. hath of late, been, from the *Fitness of Things* ; in Imitation of some celebrated Authors : Insomuch that it has become the common Cant of Deists, and it is the glaring Phrase throughout *Christianity as old, &c.* Where the *Fitness of Things* is often mentioned, as a moral Rule to God, as well as Man. Yea they think, every Man has a right to be Judge of the Conduct of God in things relating to Mankind, with respect to *this Fitness* ; as one of the sacred Privileges of Free-thinking. It cannot therefore give them just Offence, if I ask ; Doth this
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Fitness of Things absolutely bind and oblige God to Forgiveness and Reconciliation upon Repentance and Endeavour to amend; without any manner of Regard to the atoning of his Justice; or any sort of Vindication of the Honour of his Authority and Law? Or any solemn Manifestation of his Hatred of Sin, and of the abominable hideous Nature of it? Again, Is it not more agreeable to the *Fitness of Things*, That the infinite Justice, Purity or Holiness, Wisdom, and Mercy of God, should all of them concur, and be displayed at once, in the Forgiveness and Reconciliation of a Sinner; than that it should be only owing to the Attribute of Mercy? Must it be want of Generosity in God, that his infinite Wisdom hath so contrived the Rescue of perishing sinful Man, as may best consist with the Honour of his own Authority and Law, and the Harmony of all his Attributes, and more particularly of his Justice, Holiness, and Mercy; in such a manner as testifies his exuberant Love to Mankind, and his infinite Hatred of Sin; and at the same time affords the Assurance to Man (even whilst his Enemy) that his Repentance and Obedience, tho' imperfect and defective, if they are sincere, shall find Acceptance and Reward: Together with a covenanted Right and Title, to all the Divine Aid, that is necessary, in his wrestling State of Infirmary and Temptation? And all this through the Merits and Mediation
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of a Saviour, who is himself both God and Man ?

My *Second* Remark is, That Mr. Nye's Reasoning seems to proceed upon a false Notion ; *viz.* That the Punishment and Misery of Sinners, is not the natural Consequent and Effect of Sin, but is inflicted by God on Criminals. in the manner that enraged Men, wreck their Fury on their Enemies. This gives Sinners a hideous Idea of God, as an angry Being of infinite Power, armed with Thunder-bolts to be discharged upon their Heads. Whereas *God is Love*, Nothing but Sin is hateful to him. He hateth nothing he hath made. He pities Sinners, even while his Enemies ; and his Compassion moved him to contrive their Redemption. But Sin hath, as it were, a central Force towards Hell and Ruin ; and carrieth to it, as naturally as Gravitation makes the Stone move downward. It is a Contradiction to the pure and holy Nature of God ; and the intelligent Being that is tainted with it, hath thereby contracted such a moral Impurity, as is Loathsome and Odious to God, and necessarily keeps the Sinner at an infinite Distance from him, until this hateful Impurity is removed and washed away. And withal, they who are in a State of moral Guiltiness, are tied and bound with the Chain of their Sins, and can never be loosed and extricated by their own Activity and Strength, without the Divine Aid. In
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this calamitous State, they are incapable of Communication with God, or the Enjoyment of him; and unless they are rescued out of it, must naturally sink into the Region of their own Element, the Society of Devils, and other Associates of Perdition; where besides the tormenting Reflections of their own Mind, every Individual must be continually subjected to the furious Assaults of their raging and desperate Companions; without the least Degree of solacing Comfort.

The God of Love hath by infinite Wisdom contrived, and revealed the way of Redemption from this State of Sin and all the fatal Consequences of it: By which sinful Man, is again rendred capable of Communication with God, and hath afforded him, the Aid that is necessary for his Amendment, if he will embrace and comply with the Terms of Salvation offered.

§ 9. I now proceed to answer what is pleaded by Mr. *Nye* and Mr. *Lock*, with regard to any Assurance of Reconciliation and Forgiveness that is afforded by the Light of common Reason. Well,

Mr. *Nye* tells us, God is merciful, and therefore will accept the Payment we are able to make, and not insist on impossible Demands, with his own Bankrupt Creatures.

I answer, that Reason as well as Revelation tells us, that we are incapable to make

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any Payment at all; and if left to our selves, must still be contracting more Debt; and by this Dayly Malverse, are among the worst of fraudulent Bankrupts; obnoxious to infinite Justice, while the Voice of Reason as well as Revelation, doth proclaim that *the Wages of Sin is Death.*

Mr. Nye further urgeth, that no generous Man, but will forgive his Enemy, much more his Child, if he disapproves the Wrong he had done, is really grieved for it, and desires to make amends, even by suffering for the Honour of the Person injured. How much more shall God forgive all Persons, thus disposed and reformed? Since there is no Generosity in Man, but what is, with his Nature, infused into him by God.

I answer to the several Parts of this, and in the following Order. *First*, That Reason as well as Revelation tells us, That tho' a private Man may; and a generous Man, not only may, but according to Revelation, ought to forgive his private Enemy, much more his Child; if he disapproves the Wrong he has done, is really grieved for it, and desirous to make amends, even by suffering for the Honour of the Person injur'd; yea Revelation bindeth to this often, even tho' there is no such Disposition of an extraordinary Virtue, in the offending Person: Yet publick Justice may call for Satisfaction, and take place, even when the Person offended is willing to remit; and the Honour of
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the Law, claims Reparation and Atone-
ment.

Secondly, What can the Grief or Desire to make amends, avail, or plead for such Guilt, as are incessantly contracting more Guilt? And how shall the before contracted, immoral, odious, Pollution of the Sinner, that necessarily separateth from God, be done away?

Thirdly, Universal Obedience is the humane Duty, and the Link of the Chain is broken, by *offending in one Point*, (Ja. 2. 10.) And as the Zeal of suffering for God, is very rare; so it is possible that a Man may *give his Body to be burned*, and yet be void of *Charity*.

Mr. Nye doth in vain plead further, that the Creature being reformed by Penitence, is such as it ought to be, and such as God willeth it; for in our present State of corrupted Nature, and *absolutely*, there is no such humane Creature.

Mr. Nye doth further justly observe; that 'tis not Justice, but Rage, to punish where the Person is already mended. But in the Case under view, this Reasoning can take no place. For where shall the Judge of all the World, find such absolutely amended Persons among Mankind? And withal, It is never any Rage in the God of Love; but the Natural, and if I may so speak, the central Force of accumulated Guiltiness, that doth precipitate into Perdition. Infinite

Goodness can never afflict unnecessarily; but immoral Guiltiness. without his merciful Interposal to prevent it, doth necessarily drive headlong into Perdition: And the contracted odious Impurity must necessarily be removed, before there is any Capacity of Salvation. And the hideous Degrees of this Impurity, we cannot comprehend; because we have no adequate Knowledge of the Divine Purity.

Mr. *Nye* has Reason to say, that when we argue from the known, and certain Attributes of God, we are absolutely sure of the Conclusions that are evidently drawn from them. But after all that Mr. *Nye* hath pretended to infer this way; we are still sure, it can never be proved from the Divine Attributes, that God is absolutely obliged to pardon Sinners upon their Repentance, without some Atonement. And this much of the Citation from Mr. *Nye*.

The celebrated Mr. *Lock* says well, that the Light of Reason, reveals to Mankind, that God is good and merciful (only he ought to have added, that he is also Just) and that this Divine Spark of Knowledge may lead Man to discover the great Branches and Rules of the Law of Nature he is under; and his Transgression of that Law. However, even in the best use which Man can make of that *Candle of the Lord*, in his present weak and corrupted State, it is not sufficient of it self, to discover to him with any certainty of Evidence, the way to Reconciliation and Forgiveness, when he hath failed

failed in his Duty. Mr. *Nye* indeed hath offered those seeming Arguments, which I have answered; and he has done it, in such manner, as to include all that can be pleaded for the Conclusion he aims at; so artfully, and in such narrow Bounds, as is rarely to be found in any Author. But the Citation from Mr. *Lock* hath offer'd no such Reasoning.

And now upon the review of the whole that hath been said upon this Point; I conceive it doth sufficiently appear, that the Learned and the Illiterate, are both of them alike incapable of making this Discovery, by the Light of common Reason. And altho' Repentance, and Endeavour to amend, is a Dictate of Reason; as the best Course that can be taken by a sinful Man, for Reconciliation, and the rectifying his disordered Nature. Yet the doubting Anxiety, with regard to the certainty of God's accepting, either his Prayers, or best Endeavours, had been endless; if God had not removed and dissipated it, by Revelation: Which assureth Mankind, that through the Merits and Mediation of a Saviour, God is willing to be reconciled, and to accept of a sincere Obedience, though it be not absolutely perfect. And as the Lustre and united Beauty of all the harmonious Divine Attributes is thereby displayed, together with the odious Nature of immoral Guiltiness: So it is this Contrivance of infinite Wisdom, which nothing else but Revelation could discover, that can
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alone, give Solace and Comfort to the humane Mind, under that restless Anxiety, which the Sense of guilty Demerit, and the Conviction of infinite Justice, doth naturally create, in all that have a true claim to Free-thinking. It is this abatement of the Rigour of infinite Justice, which Revelation alone hath rendred certain, that gives Life and Vigour, as well as comfortable Hope and Encouragement to the humane Mind; and thereby becomes a Spring of moral Duty. A necessary Spring and Motive. Because without it, there is a restless Anxiety. Whereas it affords most powerful Arguments to Love and Gratitude, hatred of Sin, and the Alacrity of a chearful and diligent Obedience.

I may now proceed to the last of those Truths I have named, as a necessary Spring of moral Duty, which the Light of common Reason doth not discover; viz. The Assurance of the Divine Aid in our wrestling State of Infirmary.

§ 10. By this Divine Aid, I mean, a supernatural Influence, enlightning the Mind, and ministring the needful Vigour to all the Faculties; enabling both to discern, and to obey the Divine Will; to bridle and govern the unruly Passions, and disordered Affections; to overcome all the Temptations of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh; to subdue all bad Habits; and to animate and habituate

habituate the whole Man to the sincere, constant, and universal Practice of Virtue. Not only helping to acquire, but to be still encreasing the Habits of Virtue, and gradually advancing the humane natural Powers to a nearer Resemblance of the Deity; even in this wrestling State of Infirmary; until the Man doth indeed become like unto God, which is the Perfection of his Nature. In a Word, such a Divine Aid, as is suited to all the humane Needs. This is the Aid, which the more refined of the ancient Philosophers, who own'd a Deity, but wanted Revelation, accounted necessary to Mankind: As I have before hinted, from *Pythagoras*, *Simplicius* upon *Epictetus*, *Socrates*, and *Plato*. And the Representation which I briefly gave (*Chap. 3.*) of the Weakness, Corruption, and vitious Propensity of the humane Faculties to Evil; by such an universal Contagion as all Mankind are, more or less, conscious of; (whatever may be the original Cause of it) I think, may save me the Labour of descending to any further Proof; that it is indeed, a wrestling State of lamentable Infirmary, under which the whole Race of Mankind is involved: From under which, we are no more able, in our own Strength, to extricate our Selves, than the *Ethiopian* is to change his Colour, or the *Leopard* his Spots.

That a supernatural Assistance is possible; the Light of common Reason must assent.

That it is possible for God, who made Man, to afford him this Assistance, if it is his Pleasure ; and that this Assistance is desirable ; cannot in reason be denied. That it is necessary in the present corrupted State, hath been assented unto by the best and wisest of the very Heathens : Insomuch that every extraordinary Genius, or illustrious Atchievement, hath been still ascribed by them, to the Influence of some Celestial Power, or *Numen*. And the conscious Sense of humane Infirmary, and of the Difficulties of attaining true Virtue, and advancing therein to any Degrees of Perfection ; hath rendred the Conviction of this, so universal ; That a Set of pretended *Free-thinkers*, lately sprung up, who magnify the natural Powers and Capacities of Man, beyond the conscious universal Sense and Experience of the rest of Mankind, if they truly think, as they speak and publish, may well be look'd on, as a parcel of People, that are deprived of the *common Perception* of the rest of their *Species*, or are unacquainted with all sober Thinking and Reflection.

Now this supernatural Assistance, is call'd by Christians, the Divine Grace, or the Influence and Aid of the Holy Spirit, affording a new Celestial Principle of Light and Life, by which our Natures are renewed, and sanctified, and impregnated with a Divine Vigour. The Philosophers of greatest Probity did wish for this. But the Light of
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common Reason can afford no Assurance of it. It is the free Gift of God. And none but he, can bestow the first Beginnings, or the encrease of it. There is no Principle of natural Reason, that can ensure Mankind of it. But the Gospel Revelation doth so, in Terms that are most exprefs.

Every Christian hath the Promise of this Divine Assistance. That if we *ask*, we *shall receive* it. That our *Heavenly Father* will not refuse his *Holy Spirit* to them who ask it. That more Grace shall be given to those who duly use it. That this *Holy Spirit* helpeth our *Infirmities*. Yea that the *Spirit of God dwelleth in us*. And that *we are the Temples of the Holy Ghost*.

The humane Task is great and laborious, the State is wrestling, not only under great Infirmities, but against the Depravity of corrupted Nature, disordered Passions and Affections, vitious Habits, and a World of bad Example. Not only against Flesh and Blood, but *against Principalities and Powers* of invisible *spiritual Wickedness*; in-somuch that an Uncertainty of Help from Heaven, is not only Discouraging, but may create Despondency.

But the Assurance of Divine Help, is an encouraging Spring of Activity. How must it animate and chear the wrestling, drooping, fainting Spirit, to be assured, that it is only, *up and be doing*, and the Lord shall be *with us*? That through him who strengthens
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us, we are able to be more than Conquerors : For he that is in us, is stronger than they that are against us ? And that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able ; but with every Temptation, will give us a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

§ 11. After I had in the first *Chapter* of this Treatise given a short Abstract of the moral Evidence upon which the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture is established : In *Chap. 2.* I made Remarks upon the grand Argument of *Christianity as old, &c.* as it is considered only in the general. In *Chap. 3.* I proceeded to a more particular Examination of it. And altho' the Reasoning I there used, did really conclude the great and extreme need of Revelation ; yet I there confined my self, only to vindicate and plead for its Usefulness. But in this, and the fourth *Chapter*, I have directly pleaded the Necessity of this Divine Revelation. Because the Light of common Reason, is not a perfectly sufficient Rule of moral Duty, in the present State of Mankind : It being not sufficient, in it self, to teach and direct every Man, with respect to every thing he ought to know, believe, profess, and practice. And consequently, that the further Help by Divine Revelation, is not only useful and expedient ; but highly needful. Yea that by Reason of the Weakness of humane Nature, in this State
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of frail Life, it is absolutely necessary. Unless God is pleased to supply the want of it, in some other uncommon, or unknown way. And for evincing this, I have descended to exemplify, by instancing several Doctrins and Truths, that are the prime Principles, chief Springs, and Foundation of moral Duty, which every Man ought to know and believe, and consequently both to profess and practise according to them. And yet they are such Truths, as the Light of common Reason, is not, in it self, sufficient, without Revelation, to bring every Man to the knowledge of them; *viz.* The Existence of a Deity; the Doctrine of the special Divine Providence; the Certainty of a future State of Rewards as well as Punishments, the Immortality of the Soul; the Manner of Worship that will surely be acceptable to God; the Certainty that God will forgive, and be reconciled unto Sinners; and finally, the Assurance of the Divine Aid, in our present wrestling State of Infirmary.

Some of these Doctrins and Truths, are plainly such as the Light of common Reason could never have, of it self, attain'd the Assurance of them, by all the penetration of the most accomplish'd Philology: Because it doth not afford those Principles from which they may be evidently inferred. And those of them that do admit of Scientific Proof, such as the Existence of a Deity, and the Immortality of the Soul: Yet the man-

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ner in which that Proof can only be inferred, is so abstracted and metaphysical, as is beyond the Capacity of the Bulk of illiterate Mankind. And now, I think, I may draw a Confectary; *viz.* If I have sufficiently evinced all this; seeing these great Doctrines and Truths, wherein I have exemplified, are the chief Principles, necessary Springs, and Foundation of moral Duty, and of all Religion: Then it not only evidently follows, that the grand Argument of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, which I undertook to consider, is entirely subverted and destroyed: But also, that some such Revelation, as may establish those great Truths, is *absolutely necessary*. Because Religion would otherwise be destitute of any Foundation. And therefore, that the Christian Revelation, which alone doth so, is this necessary Revelation; if there is at all, any Foundation of Religion in the World. And consequently, that they who endeavour to subvert the Christian Revelation, whatever their fair Pretext may be, or whatever plausible Disguise they appear in, their Reasoning doth evidently tend, either ignorantly or designedly, to subvert and destroy all Religion whatsoever.

Let all Christians, yea Mankind, take Warning, examine, and look to this. For it is at their highest Peril.

There are other Doctrines that have great Influence on moral Duty, of the same Stamp with

with those wherein I have instanced; *i. e.* They are such as the Light of Nature dictates our need of being certified of their Truth; but cannot prove it. But for Brevity-sake, I wave to mention them.

There are also various Truths of great Importance, which natural Reason, could never have suggested, and far less discovered their Necessity; if they had not been revealed. And altho' being revealed, they become likewise Fountains of moral Duty; and are no less to be received by all to whom they are revealed, than those very Truths which I have named: Yet I do not mention them. Because they are only suggested by that Revelation, which is the Subject of our Controversy. And I will beg no Questions.

CHAP. VI.

Of the great Objection against the Necessity of the Christian Revelation.

§ 1. **N**OTHING more seems now to remain needful, for the perfecting of what I have proposed to be done, in the first Part of this Treatise; but the removing and answering an Objection, by which the Adversaries of revealed Religion, pretend to overthrow all that can be pleaded in behalf of its *Necessity*. And the Author
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of Christianity as old as the Creation, often
urgeth it, with an Air of Boasting and Tri-
umph; as if it were unanswerable. The
Strength of the Objection is sum'd up by
him as followeth; viz. Pag. 196. in these
Words; "Is it not incumbent on those,
" who make any external Revelation so ne-
" cessary to the Happiness of Mankind, to
" shew how it is consistent with the Notion
" of God's being universally Benevolent, not
" to have revealed it to all his Children,
" when all had equal need of it? Was it
" not as easy for him, to have communicated
" it to all Nations, as to any one Nation, or
" Person? Or in all Languages, as in one?"
Again Pag. 197. "When God acts as Go-
" vernor of the Universe, his Laws are alike
" design'd for all under his Government;
" that is, all Mankind. And consequently,
" what equally concerns all, must be equal-
" ly knowable by all. — And if Man-
" kind are Creatures of the same Creator,
" and fellow Creatures with one another;
" must not all their religious Duties, as they
" are Creatures of the same God, and fel-
" low Creatures, be the same?" And Pag.
380. "Where there is no Law there can
" be no Transgression. And an unknown
" Law is the same as no Law. Mankind
" at all times must be capable of knowing
" all (whether more or less) that God re-
" quires." Again Pag. 197. — "Or must
" they be obliged to leave their Country,
" and

“ and endlessly rove up and down in search
“ of such Opinions as have no Foundation in
“ Reason? Or if they be forced to stay at
“ Home, be ever examining into all the Ar-
“ bitrary Precepts which are to be met with
“ in any of the Traditionary Religions they
“ can come at? And should they do so;
“ must they not, since Reason could not direct
“ them in things not depending on Reason,
“ perpetually remain in a State of Uncer-
“ tainty?” And *Pag.* 198. “I might go
“ further to ask you; whether it is consist-
“ ent with that Impartiality which is essen-
“ tial to the Deity, not to make those he de-
“ signs should know his Will by Revelation,
“ capable of knowing that Revelation, and
“ consequently his Will contained in it, at
“ one time, as well as another?” And
Pag. 195. “Can the greatest Part of Man-
“ kind be in this deplorable Condition, for
“ want of a Revelation; which God, out of
“ his infinite Wisdom, has not thought fit to
“ communicate to them?” And *Pag.* 401.
“Can a Being be denominated Merciful and
“ Good, who is so only to a few; but Cruel
“ and Unmerciful to the rest?” And again
Pag. 393. “If the Design of God in com-
“ municating any thing of himself to Men,
“ was their Happiness, would not that
“ Design have obliged him, who at all
“ times alike desires their Happiness, to have
“ at all times alike, communicated it to
“ them? If God always acts for the good
“ of

“of his Creatures, what Reason can be assigned, why he should not from the Beginning have discovered such things as make for their Good; but defer the doing it till the time of *Tiberius*? Since the sooner this was done, the greater would his Goodness appear.”

I have collected, and here joined together, all that is of any force, dispersed thro’ out his whole Book, relating to the great Objection against the *Necessity* of revealed Religion, and particularly of the Christian Revelation; viz. Because it is not *universally known*.

It is the force of this Objection that hath deterred some learned Men, from pleading the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation: Because, it seems, they did not conceive, how this *Necessity* can be reconciled with the universal Benevolence of God, who has expressly declared that there is *no respect of Persons with him* (Rom. 2. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 17. Act. 10. 34.) And that *he is not willing that any should perish* (2 Pet. 3. 9.) And that *he would have all Men to be saved* (Tim. 2. 4.) For how can it consist with Truth, That the Christian Revelation should be *necessary*; and yet the far greater Part of Mankind, be utterly destitute of this Revelation: and excluded from the Means of attaining to the Knowledge of it, by that Divine Providence which *hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their*

their Habitation? (Act. 17. 26.) Is not this to represent the merciful God, as if he required Brick without Straw, and would Reap where he hath not Sown?

But as these learned Men have the full View of this Difficulty, on the one hand; so I humbly conceive, they have not duly weighed the Force, of what may be pleaded on the other hand, for the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation, What I have represented, relating to this *Necessity*, in the foregoing fourth and fifth Chapters, is calculated for convincing of the Deists, who reject this Revelation, because they pretend the Light of common Reason is perfectly sufficient without it. But in this *Chapter* I am obliged to have in my view, those learned Men, who believe and embrace the Christian Revelation; but yet decline to plead the *Necessity* of it. Therefore I shall here briefly represent, the Doctrine of the Gospel it self, with regard to this *Necessity*.

The Doctrine of the New Testament with regard to the Necessity of the Christian Revelation.

§ 2. Indeed, the *Necessity* of the Gospel, or Christian Revelation, is as plainly taught, and as often inculcated, in the *New Testament*, as any other Doctrine whatsoever. The Genius and Nature of the Gospel, as an Offer, and Dispensation, of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and through him alone; the

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Apparatus and Solemnity wherewith it is introduced; and the whole Contexture of it; do all concur to proclaim this *Necessity*. But I shall shew this more particularly, by Induction of such Number of Texts, as may give the clear Conviction of it.

And First, If Light is necessary in a State of Darkness, and more especially Spiritual Darkness; then the Christian Revelation is necessary. (2 Pet. 1. 19.) *A Light that shineth in a dark Place.* (Jo. 12. 35, 36, 48.) *He that walketh in Darkness knoweth not whether he goeth. While ye have the Light, believe in the Light, I am come a Light into the World, that whosoever believeth in me, should not walk in Darkness.* (Luke 1. 78, 79.) *Through the tender Mercy of our God, whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death; to guide our Feet into the way of Peace.* (Coll. 1. 13.) *Who hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* (2 Cor. 4. 6.) *For God who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined into our Hearts, to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ.* (1 Pet. 1. 9.) *That ye should shew forth the Praises of him who hath called you out of Darkness into his marvelous Light.*

Yea Secondly, the Gospel not only rescues from a State of Darkness, but of Spiritual Blind-

Blindness. St. Paul speaking of the Gentiles in the want of the Gospel, saith (Eph. 4. 18.) *Having the Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts.* And when that Apostle was miraculously called on the way to *Damascus*; the Words of Christ signifying to him, the Office to which he was called to be a Minister to the Gentiles, are these (Act. 26. 18.) *To open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they might receive Forgiveness of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are sanctified by Faith that is in me.* And (Luke 4. 18, 21.) when our Saviour had opened the Book, and read the Words of *Isaiah*, of which he said, *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears: The Words are; The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me, to preach the Gospel to the Poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken Hearted, to preach Deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of Sight to the Blind, to set at Liberty them that are bruised.* (2 Cor. 4. 4.) *In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.* The Necessity I am pleading for, is by these Texts intimated. For if the Blind, lead the Blind; both shall fall into the Ditch. (Mat. 15. 14.)

Yea Thirdly, Is Liberty necessary to Captives and Slaves; to those that are in Captivity, and Bondage under Satan? Then (2 Pet. 11. 19.) *For of whom a Man is overcome; of the same, he is brought in Bondage.* And is not that necessary whereby Men may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will? (2 Tim. 11. 26.) That which preacheth Deliverance to the Captives. (Luke 4. 18.) Deliverance from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. (Rom. 8. 21.) And is sent to turn them from the Power of Satan unto God. (Act. 26. 18.) *If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.*

Fourthly, If that is necessary which brings Spiritual Life, to those who are dead in Sins and Trespases; which brings Strangers and Aliens that are without Hope, and without God; in the Number of God's People and Children. Which brings Peace and Reconciliation with God, to those that are at Enmity with him: Then (Ephes. 1. Verses 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18.) *And you hath he quickned, who were dead in Trespases, and Sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this World — That in the Ages to come he might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his Kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by Grace ye are saved through Faith; and that not of your Selves, it is the Gift of God.*

— Where-

— Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past, Gentiles in the Flesh — that at that time ye were without Christ, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World: But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were some time far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ. For he is our peace — who hath broken down the Mid-wall of Partition — and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh. For through him, we both (i. e. Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (2 Cor. 5. 18, 19, 20.) And all Things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ; and hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation — and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation. Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's Stead; be ye reconciled unto God. (1 Pet. 11. 10) Which in time past were not a People, but now are the People of God: Which had not obtained Mercy, but now have obtained Mercy. (Gal. 4. 4, 5.) But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman — to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons. (Jo. 1. 12.) But as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God; even to them that believe on his Name. And

if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8. 17. and Col. 1. 20, 21.) And having made Peace through the Blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile — and you that were sometime alienated, and Enemies in your Mind by wicked Works; yet now hath he reconciled; in the Body of his Flesh through Death. And hence, the Christian Revelation is often call'd the Gospel of Peace; and preaching Peace by Jesus Christ. (A&T. 10. 36.) For he is our Peace. (Eph. 2. 14.) And the Gospel is the Word of Reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5. 19.) And the Word of Life. (Phil. 11. 16.)

Fifthly, If Spiritual Food, and Nourishment be necessary; so is the Gospel. In (Ezek. 34.) it was promised concerning Christ, that he should feed his Flock: Feed them in a good Pasture; and again Verse ult. Ye my Flock, the Flock of my Pasture, are Men. And (Jo. ult. 15, 16, 17.) Our Saviour says Feed my Lambs; and feed my Sheep, (1 Pet. 5. 2.) Feed the Flock of God (A&T. 20. 28.) Take heed to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Over-seers; to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood. (Jo. 6. 27, 32, 33, 34, 35.) Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth to everlasting Life; My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven, that giveth Life unto the World: Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this Bread. And Jesus said

said unto them, *I am the Bread of Life. It is he who nourisheth and cherisheth the Church.* (Eph. 5. 29.) and (1 Tim. 4. 6.) *Nourished up in the Words of Faith, and good Doctrine.* The Weak to be fed with Milk, and the Strong with Meat. (1 Cor. 3. 2. and Heb. 5. 12. 14.) The Necessity pleaded, is plainly intimated in the Prophet (*Amos 8. 11.*) *Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a Famine in the Land; not a Famine of Bread, Nor a Thirst of Water; but of hearing the Words of the Lord.*

Sixthly, And if Sowing in order to Reap; if Planting, Watering, and Cultivating is necessary; then see the Explication of the Parable (Mat. 13. and Luke 8.) and 1 Cor. 9. 11. *If we have sown unto you Spiritual Things.* The Church is the *Vineyard* which God's Right-hand hath planted. His Ministers are the *Labourers*. Paul doth plant, Apollo watereth, &c. it is God that giveth the *Encrease*.

To set down all in the *New Testament* relating to this *Necessity*, would be to transcribe a great Part of it. And therefore I shall promiscuously cast together some Passages of those, that do most expressly teach it, "*(Act. ult. 28.) Be it known therefore*" "*unto you that the Salvation of God is sent*" "*unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear*" "*it. (Act. 13. 26.) To you is the Word of*" "*Salvation sent. (Eph. 1. 13.) The Gospel*" "*of your Salvation. (Rom. 1. 16.) For I*

“ am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ;
“ for it is the Power of God unto Salva-
“ tion, to every one that believeth ; to the
“ Jew first, and also to the Greek (*Jo. 3. 16.*)
“ For God so loved the World, that he gave
“ his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-
“ lieveth in him, should nor perish, but have
“ everlasting Life. (*And Verses 17, 18, 19.*)
“ That the World through him might be
“ saved. He that believeth on him, is not
“ condemned ; but he that believeth not, is
“ condemned already, &c. (*1 Jo. 5. 4, 5,*
“ *11, 12, 19, 20.*) For whatsoever is born
“ of God, overcometh the World. And this
“ is the Victory that overcometh the World,
“ even our Faith. Who is he that over-
“ cometh the World, but he that believeth
“ that Jesus is the Son of God ? And this
“ is the Record, that God hath given to us
“ eternal Life ; and this Life is in his Son.
“ He that hath the Son, hath Life ; and he
“ that hath not the Son, hath not Life. And
“ we know that we are of God ; and the
“ whole World lieth in Wickedness. And
“ we know that the Son of God is come,
“ and hath given unto us Understanding that
“ we may know him that is true. And we
“ are in him that is true, even in his Son
“ Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and
“ eternal Life. (*Hebr. 11. 6.*) But without
“ Faith it is impossible to please God.
“ (*1 Tim. 1. 15.*) This is a faithful Saying,
“ and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus
“ Christ

“ Christ came into the World to save Sin-
“ ners. (*Phil.* 3. 8.) Yea Doubtless, and I
“ count all things but loss, for the excel-
“ lency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus
“ my Lord. (*Phil.* 2. 9, 10, 11.) Wherefore
“ God hath also exalted him, and given him
“ a Name, which is above every Name;
“ that at the Name of Jesus, every Knee
“ shall bow — and that every Tongue
“ shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord.
“ (*Jo.* 14. 11.) I am the Way, the Truth,
“ and the Life. No Man cometh unto the
“ Father, but by me. (*Jo.* 17. 3.) And this
“ is Life eternal, that they may know Thee,
“ the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom
“ thou hast sent. (*1 Cor.* 9. 16.) For a Ne-
“ cessity is layed upon me. Yea Woe is unto
“ me, if I preach not the Gospel. (*Act.* 4. 12.)
“ Neither is there Salvation in any other
“ (but Jesus Christ of *Nazareth*, as *ver.* 10.)
“ For there is none other Name given a-
“ mong Men, under Heaven, whereby we
“ can be saved. (*2 Cor.* 4. 3, 4.) If our Gos-
“ pel be hid, it is to them that are lost. In
“ whom the God of this World hath blinded
“ the Minds of them which believe not.
“ Lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of
“ Christ, who is the Image of God should
“ shine unto them. (*Mat.* 18. 11, and *Luke*
“ 19. 10. For the Son of Man is come to
“ seek, and to save that which was lost.
“ (*Jam.* 1. 18.) Begat us by the Word of
“ Truth. (*1 Pet.* 1. 23.) Being Born again
“ by

"by the Word of God. (*Gal. 3. 22.*) But the
 "Scripture hath concluded all under Sin,
 "that the Promise of Faith by Jesus Christ,
 "might be given to them that believe.
 "(*2 Pet. 3. 18.*) Grow in Grace, and in
 "the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,
 "Jesus Christ. (*Jam. 1. 21.*) Receive with
 "Meekness the engrafted Word, which is
 "able to save your Souls. (*2 Thess. 1. 7, 8.*)
 "The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed
 "from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in
 "flaming Fire, taking Vengeance of them
 "that know not God, and that obey not
 "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Jo. 3.*
 "*36.*) He that believeth on the Son hath
 "everlasting Life. And he that believeth
 "not the Son, shall not see Life: But the
 "Wrath of God abideth on him. *The Pro-*
 "*phet* (*Hosea 4. 6.*) *had said*; My People
 "are destroyed for lack of Knowledge."
 For preventing this, our Saviour's last Com-
 mand to his Disciples before his Ascension,
 is, (*Mar. ult. 25, 26.*) *Go ye into all the*
World; and preach the Gospel to every Crea-
ture. He that believeth and is baptized, shall
be saved: But he that believeth not shall be
damned. (*Mat. ult. 18.*) *Go ye therefore*
and teach all Nations, &c.

Yea not only the inward Belief, but the
 external Profession of the Gospel is declared
 Necessary. (*Rom. 10. 9.*) *If thou shalt con-*
fess with thy Mouth, and shalt believe in
thine Heart, that God hath raised him from
the

the Dead; thou shalt be saved—Verse 10. *And with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* (Phil. 2 11.) *That every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* See also *Mat. 10. 32. Luke 12. 8. Hebr. 10 23.*

I have collected the foregoing Texts, that every Christian Reader may with ease perceive the Doctrine of the *New Testament*, with regard to the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation; and thereby judge impartially; if there is not Reason to plead this *Necessity*, as a manifest Doctrine of the Gospel. And yet truly this is far from being a full and compleat Collection. It were easy, if needful, to shew further; that this was the constant and unanimous Doctrine in the first Ages of Christianity. And why any should pretend; *now*, to drop this *Necessity*; or how the avowed deserting of this Doctrine, can be accounted for among Christians, is beyond my Comprehension: And the Eighteenth Article of the Church of England, is so expressly peremptory with respect to this *Necessity*, as must needs confront them all, who have sign'd those Articles, and yet decline to assert it.

§ 3. But now seeing there is certainly an harmonious Agreement, and Consistency of all Truths whatsoever: The Question doth therefore plainly arise: How this *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation, can consist with this *Fact*; That the said Revelation, hath
not

not always been, and as yet is not, *universally* manifested? Is not God universally Benevolent? Has he not declared, that *he is no Respector of Persons? That he would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth: (1 Tim. 2. 4.)* And that *He is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to Repentance (2 Pet. 3. 9.)* And yet, is it not evident in *Fact*, that this Revelation came not, until the time of *Tiberius*, and is not yet manifested unto all? Must all the Heathen World perish, and be excluded from the universal Benevolence of God? This is the Objection to be removed.

Of the Consistency of these two Truths. The Necessity of the Christian Revelation. And the universal Benevolence of God.

The Answer which 'tis said an Ancient gave to one who asked, What shall become of the *Pagans*, that never heard of Christ? was this; You may well be saved without knowing that. And certainly, tho' all *necessary* Truths are truly consistent together; yet there are not wanting Instances of some Truths, whereof our shallow Understanding cannot easily discern their Consistency; nor explain with absolute Certainty, the Manner how they do consist. I suppose, all that have been conversant in the Study of Philosophy, must be sensible of this. That thus it is, with regard to infinite *Justice*,
and

and infinite *Mercy*, is undeniable. And yet, where Truths are equally manifest, they are equally to be admitted. And thus, the *universal Benevolence* of God, on the one hand; and the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation on the other; being both of them equally true, and equally revealed; are therefore both of them, to be equally admitted, tho' we should not be able with absolute Certainty, to explain the Manner, how they actually do consist: If this is not revealed to us, it may, therefore, be certainly known, only to God. And doubtless he will sometime vindicate his *Truth*, his *Justice*, his *Mercy*, and *universal Goodness* to Mankind; when he shall display the fullness of Harmony and Agreement of those Truths under View; altho' now this lieth somewhat latent and obscure to us. And it is enough, in all Conscience, in our present Weakness of Capacity, if we can, even without plain and express Revelation, suggest or conceive, how, in any one Manner, or in different Ways, these two great Truths; God's *universal Benevolence*, and the *Necessity of such Divine Revelation as is not Universal*; may truly be Consistent. Altho' we cannot with absolute Certainty determine all the beautiful Manner of their Consistency.

I shall therefore, as briefly as I can, represent the Substance of what hath been said by learned Christians, with regard to
this

this *Consistency*. And then add what I conceive may be further suggested, for removing this Difficulty.

And First, the *Calvinist* Divines, do not consider this as any difficulty of Moment. Because upon their System, God hath no regard to the Salvation of any, but those who are the *Elect*, by an absolute Decree. But with due Respect to the learned and pious Men of that Perswasion, this is a Doctrine which I am not able to digest. And seeing their *System* doth exceedingly increase the Difficulty; and gives Horror to all Christians that are not of their Sentiments; and withal that it doth not *now* lie in my way to treat of their *System*. I shall therefore only make one Remark that bears some Relation to it; because some who are not *Calvinists*, think it a sufficient Answer to the Difficulty under View; *viz.* That it hath not pleased God to provide any Remedy for the Angels that fell. And they think, whatever may vindicate the Divine Conduct in regard to this; may equally serve to do it, with regard to the want of the *universal* Manifestation of the Gospel: Seeing there was nothing in fall'n Man, to plead for the Divine Compassion, any more than in the Apostate Spirits.

Now altho' it is plainly the Doctrine of the Gospel, that the Rescue and Salvation of fall'n Man, is truly owing to the free and unbounded Mercy and Compassion of
God:

God : And therefore no Christian can plead, that God was bound to afford any Remedy for Mankind, more than for the fall'n Angels : Yet the Situation and Circumstances of the one, and of the other, was in several Respects, so vastly different, that it was certainly more Congruous to the Divine Equity and Goodness, to extend his Compassion unto fall'n Mankind.

For *First*, The Angels that Fell, were of a higher Perfection, and a superior Nature. And as their Sin was aggravated by their greater Capacities ; so consequently likewise by their greater Ingratitude.

Secondly, They were the first that introduced *moral* Evil into the World of Creatures, by an insolent Rebellion ; all the Aggravations and Circumstances of which, we do not know. But they may have been greater than we can conceive.

Thirdly, They were not Seduced and Enticed by any more subtil Enemy ; but Revolted of themselves.

Fourthly, They were *Beings* purely *Intellectual*, and thereby were not liable to be tempted by any sensual Gratification, which was the Rock of Ruin, upon which they first decoyed Man ; as well as they have ever since, been thereby alluring him into Destruction.

Fifthly, They were the vitious Instruments of tempting and seducing Man ; to draw him from his Obedience to God, into Subjection

jection unto Satan ; and thereby exerted the utmost Malice both against God and their fellow Creature. Such Malice to Man as carried its direful Effects to all the Generations of his Posterity.

And *Finally*, As *Existent Beings*, they were all of them Personally involved in the actual Transgression. For tho' we read of *Principalities* and *Powers* among them, under the *God of this World*, and his usurped Dominion ; and believe there are *Legions* of them ; yet we have no Accounts of their Propagation.

Such were the Circumstances and Situation of the Apostate Spirits. Whereas on the other hand, though the Transgression of Man had hainous Aggravations :

Yet these Aggravations were not so hainous, as in the Fall of the Devils ; but capable of Mitigation ; by reason of Surprise, the insinuating Force of sensual Appetite, and the artful Subtilty of an over-reaching Tempter. But altho' such alleviating Circumstances, might be truly pleaded in Man's Behalf ; yet certainly his Ingratitude and Rebellion, did aggravate, more than all Excuses could extenuate. And therefore there was nothing in Man, to merit a Deliverance ; and God might have justly abandoned him to the Miserie into which he had plunged himself ; tho' his Demerit was not equal to that of Devils.

But

But that which was of greatest Weight, and did truly render the Case of Mankind the most to be compassionated, was certainly the Consideration of the *numerous Posterity*, all wretchedly involved into the hideous Calamity and Perdition; tho' none of them had been Personally guilty in the actual Transgression. A Circumstance which of it self, and alone considered, did surely render it more Congruous to the Divine Equity and Goodness, to extend his Compassion unto fall'n Mankind, than unto Devils. And withal, The Pride of Devils did doubtless insult, and please it self, that through Rage and Malice, they had wrought Man's Fall; and hoped they had thereby baffled the Wisdom and Power of God, who had created Man for an End, which they could hinder the attaining of. And this may have added to the Congruity of the distinguished Mercy.

More might be added; but I think enough is said, to shew that it was more Congruous to the Divine Equity and Goodness, to extend his Compassion unto fall'n Man, than unto Devils. And on this Head, which hath incidentally come thus briefly to be treated of, I shall only add: That in the Gospel God hath expressly declared his *universal Benevolence* to Mankind. And tho' I am not concerned to reconcile this, with the *Calvinistick* System, yet it is my Business to shew, how it may consist with the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation, by removing this Ob-

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jection;

jection; *viz.* Because it is not *universally* manifested.

Having layed aside, or rather dropt, the Reply of the *Calvinist* Divines, to the *Difficulty* under Examination: The Substance pleaded by other learned Christians, with regard to it; is as followeth.

And *First*, they plead, That the want of *universal* and *equal* Manifestation of the Christian Revelation; can no more be a just Objection against the *Necessity* and Obligations thereof, than it is against the *Necessity* and Obligations even of Natural Religion. For the Deists themselves must be sensible; that all Men, have neither equal Capacity, nor equal Opportunity, of understanding the Obligations even of Natural Religion. And truly, the urging of this Objection with such Vehemency, gives too just Jealousy, that the modern Deists are mostly willing to be rid of *Natural*, as well as *Revealed Religion*, and of all *moral* Obligations whatsoever; and that at Bottom, they are Athiests, whatever Masks they may affect to appear in.

Again *Secondly*, They further plead, that as it is no ways inconsistent with the impartial Justice, and universal Benevolence, of God; that all his intelligent Creatures are not of the same Rank; that as all Men are not endued with the same Pregnancy of Faculties, and Capacities; nor are all equal to Angels: So neither is it inconsistent therewith, that all Men have not equally afforded

to

to them, the same Means and Opportunities, that may render them equally capable of attaining the same Degrees of Happiness. For infinite Wisdom hath the same right of ordering this Variety, as of making Variety of Creatures, in many various Circumstances. And because here it may be answered; that allowing of all this, yet when the Question relates to the Christian Revelation as *Necessary* to the avoiding eternal Misery, and the attaining even any Degree of eternal Felicity; all that is pleaded, can never take off the Objection under view; if it is not, at least in some Degrees, *universally* manifested. Therefore,

Thirdly, and chiefly, it is pleaded by learned Christians; That the Benefit by Jesus Christ, is more or less extended to the whole Race of Mankind; *viz.* Not only backwards to those who lived, before his Manifestation in our humane Nature; but also forwards to those, who though they lived after it; yet never heard of his Appearance, and never had the Gospel revealed to them: So as to bring all Men into a Capacity of Salvation; and to render it absolutely their own Fault, if they shall perish. And yet at the same time, they plead, that this is highly consistent with the Doctrine of the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation, altho' neither *equally*, nor *universally* manifested.

And because it is this third Way of pleading that I am chiefly to insist upon, as that by which, I think, the Consistency of these two Truths, the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation on the one hand, and the *Divine Equity* and *universal Benevolence* on the other; may be best accounted for. Therefore I shall endeavour to represent it with all the Plainness and Evidence I can.

I have already observed; that it is enough in all Conscience, in our present Weakness of Capacity, if we can, even without plain and express Revelation, suggest or conceive, how in any one Manner, or in different Ways, these two great Truths, of God's *universal Benevolence*; and the *Necessity* of such Divine Revelation as is not *Universal*; may truly be Consistent: Altho' we cannot with absolute Certainty determine or explain all the beautiful Manner of their Consistency. And it is in this View, that I shall here, only name one Manner of reconciling these two Truths, that is used by some, who plead in the *third* Way mentioned; though I am not to insist upon it; because I think it may be better done otherwise.

This one Manner of reconciling these two Truths, is as followeth; *viz.* That in some future State, and before the final Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in the great and general Day of Judgment; all who have never had the Benefit of the Gospel Revelation, and the Terms of Salvation therein

therein offered ; shall have some time of Probation, vouchsafed to them, under the Tender of it. And indeed, it cannot be denied that this is possible with God. And the very possibility of this, is enough to silence the Objection. Yet I shall not here trouble the Reader with the Reasoning by which they who embrace this Sentiment, endeavour to establish and support it ; because I think the Difficulty may be sufficiently carried off, without it.

And I proceed to represent more particularly, the more common way of solving the Difficulty under view, that is taken and insisted on, by the Learned who plead in the *third* Manner mentioned ; viz. From the original Promise of the *Messiah*, made to *Adam*, renewed to *Abraham* and to *Isaac*, and published by the ancient Prophets ; but more especially from the Doctrine of the Gospel, concerning the extent of the Redemption purchased by *Jesus Christ* : From all this, I say, they affirm ; That all Mankind, even they who never hear of Christ, have however so much Benefit thereby, and in such Proportion, that in the due use of the Light they enjoy, more Light will be added and imparted to them. And that where the Light of the Gospel is intirely wanting, it is intirely owing to the sinful Abuse of the Light enjoyed. For God would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. And that, as even before the Deluge upon the whole Earth,

his Spirit did strive with Men: So he is never wanting to afford such Proportion of *Light and Grace*, as if duly cultivated and improved, would dispose for, and render capable of, the receiving more: And that the Reason why the Gospel is not *equally and universally* manifested, is not from any *Partiality* in God; But because some are more, and others less capable of Benefit by it; and of improving the Blessing and Advantage it affords. That this is the way used by God in general: And if in some rare Instances relating to a few particular Persons, his Conduct is any ways different, for Reasons of infinite Wisdom, such *excepted Cases*, serve only to us, for confirming the Rule of his general Conduct. And withal, that it is greater Mercy in God, not to offer the Benefit of the Gospel, to those who he knows would despise and reject it, and thereby increase their Condemnation; besides the Incongruity of *casting Pearls before Swine*; and *giving that which is Holy unto Dogs*. Mat. 7. 6.

This is the Substance of what hath been pleaded. And what is briefly represented in the above Paragraph, doth intirely carry off, the Difficulty proposed; and sufficiently reconcile the *universal Benevolence* of God, with the *Necessity* of the Christian Revelation, even tho' it hath not been, or is not, *universally* manifested.

Now tho' this way of removing the Objection, by reconciling the *universal Divine Bene-*

Benevolence, with the *Necessity* of such Revelation, as is not universally manifested, seems to be pointed out to us by Revelation it self. Yet in the Divine View, there may be Variety of other Ways, though they are unknown to us. For as *his Judgments are unsearchable*, so *his Ways are past finding out*. And known unto him alone, are all his Ways, as well as all his Works. *Rom. 11. 33. Act. 15. 18.* What is now unknown to us, may be display'd, when God thinks fit. However even in this way that is mentioned, all the boasted Difficulties that have been urged upon this Subject, either by the Author of *Christianity as old*, &c. or other Infidels; are with Ease dissipated. And if this is not the precise and only way of reconciling those Truths under view; yet it is the best way that hath been hitherto offered. Because Revelation doth afford the Principles upon which it is established; viz. the first Promise made to *Adam* after the *Fall*, renewed to *Abraham*. (*Gen. 12. 3. and 18. 18. and 22. 18.*) And to *Isaac*. (*Gen. 26. 4.*) And confirmed by the ancient Prophets. But more especially, the manifest Doctrine of the Gospel, which doth expressly preach the *universal Extent* of the Redemption purchased by our Saviour. In this Way the Questions of Infidelity may be easily answered; viz. in manner following.

Query. How can it consist with Divine Benevolence, that a Revelation so necessary,

is not communicated unto all? Or that it should have been deferred, so many Ages; seeing the sooner it was done, it was the greater Goodness? Forasmuch as all have equal need of it.

Answer. Because in the View of the Benevolent God, tho' all have equal need of it; yet all are not fitted to receive it. But on the contrary, many would have their Guilt increased by it, and become liable to a greater Condemnation, by the abusing, or refusing of it. And it is great Goodness in God to reserve it for those who are more likely to be bettered by it. For the all-knowing God doth perfectly discern the State and Disposition of Men. And he who displays his universal Goodness, by causing *his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall upon the Just and the Unjust*; because their natural Effects do follow in a natural Way; and have little, or no Dependence on *moral* Agents; is yet determined by the same wise Goodness, to withhold the Benefit of the Gospel Light, and Heavenly Dew thereof, where he knows it would only increase Guilt and Condemnation; and to bestow it rather when, and where, he sees it will most conduce to the Happiness of Mankind; and be less hurtful with regard to the perverse Obstinacy of those who wilfully refuse or abuse it. Even in the Times of *Tiberius*, if all Mankind had been of the Temper of *Judas and Pilate, Chorazin and Bethsaida*, and those wicked *Jews*, who were so violently

violently bent to have our Saviour Crucified; it had been greater Goodness to have left the World without the Gospel, till an Age better disposed to receive it: Although all Ages have equal need of it. So that in the choice of the Times and Places, of manifesting it, he is not, *Good only to a few, and Cruel and Unmerciful to all the rest*: But this Choice of infinite Wisdom, is plainly the Effect of *universal* Benevolence to Mankind.

'Tis true, If God were to deal with Men, by an irresistible Influence; then, all times, and all Places might be equally capable of Benefit by the Gospel. But will the Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* say this could consist with the Fitness and Nature of Things, which he so much talks of, as a Rule even to God? And if God deals with Man, as he is a *moral* Agent, endowed with *Freedom*; and does not over power his Nature, and use him like a *Machine*; then to ask, Why is not the Gospel equally dispensed, at all times, and in all Places? Is as Foolish and Unreasonable; as to ask, Why the Labourers do not plow and cast the Seed on Rocks and barren Sands? Or why the Physician doth not administer the same Physick, and in the same Proportion, to every Constitution? As in the Corporeal World the same Heat of the Sun that renders one Soil fruitful, will scorch another; as it will soften some Bodies, and serve only to harden others: So all intelligent Minds in the *moral* World, are not in
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the due Disposition to be benefited by the Beams of the Sun of Righteousness. And it is certainly to the Condemnation of many that *Light is come into the World, while they delight in Darkness rather than in Light.* But infinite Goodness always hath afforded, and still doth afford, with an infinite Wisdom, the necessary Manifestations of his Divine Light, at such times, and in such Proportion, as may best conduce to the universal Good.

There remains, one Query of the Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* copied from him, in the beginning of this Chapter. And it is so pitifully Trifling, that I only take Notice of it, that I may not seem to neglect any thing pleaded by him, that relates to the Objection under view. For it seems only designed as a Sneer upon the Wisdom of the Divine Providence, and favours rather of Atheism, than sober Reasoning; viz. "Was it not as easy for God, to have communicated it; (i. e. his Revelation) to all Nations, as to any one Nation, or Person; or in all Languages, as in one?" As if the Easiness, or Uneasiness and Difficulty of Things, were the Reason of God's Doing, or not Doing them. I have already offered such Reason of the Divine Conduct, with regard to the wise Choice of the *Times, Places, Persons, and Proportion*, that is used in affording the necessary Revelation of his Holy Will, and Heavenly Doctrine; as doth sufficiently vindicate the *Impartiality* of his universal Bene-

Benevolence. And the naughty Question, serves only to shew the Boldness and Prejudices of the Author.

§ 4. Now there are two remarkable Passages in the *New Testament*, which tend very much to establish this way I have insisted on, for reconciling the *universal* Benevolence of God, with the *Necessity* of a Revelation tho' it is not *universally* manifested. And they may go far to satisfy Christians that this way of reconciling them, is truly Genuine and Solid.

The first Passage is of *Corneilius the Centurion*; (in *Act. 10.*) *A just Man, and one that feared God; whose Prayers and Alms were accepted*, even before the Gospel was manifested to him. Yet by the Visit and Direction of an Angel, and the command of the Holy Spirit, St. Peter was sent for, and came to him, to instruct him in the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel, as what was further *useful* to him, and therefore imparted as to one that had the due Disposition to receive it. And this agrees with *Act. 33. 48.* *As many as were ordained to eternal Life, believed.* In the original, it is, *οσταντοι; 1. e.* as many as were disposed for the Truths relating to eternal Life.

The other Passage tending to recommend this Way of reconciling the Truths under view, as Genuine and Solid; is in *Mat. 9. 37.* 38. and the Parallel *Luke 10. 2.* Where our Saviour says to his Disciples, *The Harvest*
truly

truly is great, but the Labourers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he will send forth Labourers into his Harvest. Plainly intimating, that in the Times of the first Publication of the Gospel, there was a more universal Disposition of Mankind, prepared to receive it. And this was verified by the effectual Success of it in that Age, and a few Ages following: In the plentiful and astonishing Harvest of Christianity, through the Industry of those Labourers which God sent forth, and the plentiful Effusion of the Divine Grace upon the Nations Civil and Barbarous, from the Disposition which the Gospel throughout the World, every where, found in Mankind, to receive it.

§ 5. What hath been represented goeth far to establish the way I have followed, for removing the Difficulty arising from the want of an universal Manifestation of the Gospel: And to vindicate the Impartiality and Benevolence of God, as consistent, even in this Case, with the *Necessity* of the Gospel. For when, and wherever Mankind are known by God, to be of a Disposition proper to be bettered by the Gospel, he will never be wanting to afford it. But where he knows their Guilt would be aggravated by the Contempt and Rejecting of it; the want of it is less hurtful there; than to enjoy it. And when it is ungratefully abused, and God foresees there will be no Amendment; it is

is with-drawn, and the Candle-stick is removed.

Nothing of Moment can be suggested in Opposition to this way of removing the Difficulty we are treating of; but one *Objection*, that perhaps may be raised from the Words of our Saviour *Matt. 11. 22, 23, 24.* And the Parellel in *St. Luke 10. Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty Works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in Sackcloth and Ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum who art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell: For if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this Day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.* How shall this consist with that *Impartiality* of the *universal Benevolence* of God as above represented; viz. as manifesting the *necessary Revelation*, always suitably to the *Disposition* of Mankind; and as he knows it will, more or less, have the due *Effects*, and saving *Influence*? For by this Rule, *Tyre and Sidon*, should have rather had the Gospel, and the mighty Works, than *Chorazin and Bethsaida*.

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The Answer is easy. For First, with respect to Tyre and Sidon, of whom it is said; That in the Advantages enjoyed by Chorazin and Bethsaida, They would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes: We are led into the true Meaning of these Words, by comparing them with 1 King 21. from Verse 17. to the End of that Chapter. For the Holy Scripture is the best Interpreter of it self. And there we find; the incorrigible King Ahab, upon the Denunciation of the Divine Judgments by the Prophet Elijah, was so far influenced, that it is said; *When Ahab heard those Words, he rent his Clothes, and put Sackcloth upon his Flesh, and fasted, and lay in Sackcloth, and went softly. And the Word of the Lord came unto Elijah the Tishbite, Saying; Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the Evil in his Days, &c.* By this we plainly see, there may be a Repentance without a true Conversion, and which is far short of the *Repentance unto Life, that bringeth forth Fruits Meet for Repentance.* And that yet, such is the boundless Compassion of God, that there is a proportionable regard had, even to this imperfect Repentance. And it is not possible to express the Encouragement this gives to the truly Penitent.

Again, It is remarkable, That with regard to Tyre and Sidon, our Saviour saith
only

only this ; that it shall be more tolerable for them in the Day of Judgment, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida : Which is far from implying their Salvation by a due Repentance, even though they had enjoyed the Advantages of the other. And it is only here insinuated, that there will be Degrees of more, or less, future Infelicity, as well as Happiness.

Again, Tyre and Sidon were soon to have the offer of the Gospel : As soon doubtless as did consist with a due Disposition for receiving it, to their eternal Benefit. And withal, mean time, they lay near to Judea ; and being Cities of Traffick, and the Jews also in those times a Trading People, they could not fail to have some Knowledge of what was both taught and transacted in Judea. God gives liberally to all. And doubtless Tyre and Sidon had their Share. Yea they were to be blamed, if they had not Moses and the Prophets.

And then Secondly. As to Capernaum, it is only said, *If the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this Day* : Which hath no Relation to a State of Eternity. God bears long even with an incorrigible People, till the Cup of their Iniquity is full. The exterminating Temporal Judgment, even on Sodom, and in such a way as ought to strike the Terror of their Guilt, into all the Nations in the World

World, might have been delayed ; if God who design'd its Fate to be a Beacon unto Mankind, had thought fit to vouchsafe to it, the distinguished Works done in *Capernaum*. But with regard to a future State, it is only said ; *It shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom, than for thee.* Which doth indeed shew, the hainous Aggravation of the Guilt of *Capernaum*, under the most advantageous Opportunities : But gives no Countenance to the Difficulty proposed. And this may suffice for Answer to the Objection.

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APPENDIX.

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CHAP. I.

Of the State of the Pagan World.

§. I. **T**H O' there seems to be enough said; not only to establish the Necessity of the Christian Revelation; but also, to vindicate the Consistency of this with the universal Benevolence of God, notwithstanding this Revelation is not equally and universally manifested, viz. Because this is only owing, with regard to those who want it, to their own Neglect, or want of due Care of cultivating and improving the Means they enjoy; and to become thereby in some Capacity of being better'd by it. Yet before I close this First Part, it may be proper to consider this Point more particularly. From what hath been said, the ingenious Reader will perceive, that my Design hath been to vindicate the Conduct of God towards Mankind, relating to their Eternal State, from all Partiality whatsoever; yet it is obvious, that there was no Necessity for carrying my Pleading so high: Because, truly, some degrees of Inequality in the Distribution of the Divine Favour, even with regard to eternal Felicity, may well consist with the universal Benevolence of God: His adorable and infinite Goodness and Compassion towards all, is abundant-

ly displayed, if all have so far the benefit of the Merit and Mediation of a Saviour, as to be all placed in such Capacity of Salvation; that if they Perish, it is through their own Fault, and their want of Care so to cultivate the Means afforded, as they may be thereby prepared, disposed, and rendred capable of Benefit by the further necessary and greater Manifestation of the supernatural Aid and Light afforded in the Gospel. This, I say, is enough to vindicate the universal Benevolence of God; altho' some may be more, or less distinguished with such special degrees of uncommon Divine Favour, as is not universally communicated, according as seems good to Infinite Wisdom.

For illustrating of this, let it be considered, That the Glory of the great Creator is the more exalted by the manifold variety of his Works. In the corporeal World all Stones are not Gems; nor do all Herbs and Trees yield Fragrant Flowers and Fruits: *There is one Glory of the Sun, and another of the Moon, and another of the Stars, for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, 1 Cor. 15.* Of Animals, some have more, some have less, of Beauty and Sagacity: Of Intelligent Beings, all are not equal in Perfection; as there are Angels and Archangels, so of Mankind there are various Ranks, some to Rule, some to Obey; some of higher, some of lower Capacity; tho' God gives liberally to all. And in the same manner, even with regard to eternal Felicity, for which all were originally design'd by God, it is not necessary that all should be design'd for the same equality of Happiness and Glory, *In my Father's House, saith our Saviour, there are many Mansions.*

And this may well account, in part, for the various degrees of the Divine Manifestations afforded to different Ages, Places, and Persons, seeing there is

Chap. 1. *A P P E N D I X* 3

an universal Redemption of all Mankind by the Merit and Mediation of a Saviour ; and that the universal Benevolence, with regard to eternal Salvation, is still so far extended, unto all, as to render all in a Capacity to attain it ; and that none do perish but through their own Fault, by not cultivating duly the Means and Opportunities they enjoy ; by doing whereof more would be bestowed, and the necessary Light and Grace of the Gospel imparted, when they are thereby fitted to receive it to their Profit.

And then, if it is farther considered, That it is only by this due cultivation of the Means enjoyed, and more or less dispensed unto all, in some degrees of Sufficiency, that Mankind are rendered capable of being better'd by more Light and greater Means and Opportunities, which otherwise would only be abused by them, to the aggravating of their Guilt and Condemnation : And withal, that the All-knowing God discerns the State and Disposition of all Men, and dispenseth even his necessary greater Manifestations, only so as they may be least destructive to any, and may best conduce to the universal Good. This farther Consideration doth fully enable us to account for the distinguished manner of his Dealing, whilst some enjoy more, some less, of Gospel-Light ; and others, perhaps the greater number, none of it : And yet all this unequal Distribution, is in a perfect Consistency with the universal Benevolence of God.

Mean time it is certain, that when God shall judge the World in Righteousness, the Heathens who have never heard of the Gospel, shall only be punished for the undue use of the Light and Means they have enjoyed ; and never be charged with their not performing any Duty that is only notified by the Laws of the Gospel, any farther than as their want of the Gospel is owing to their neglect of cultivating

the Advantages they enjoy, and thereby never attaining the due Disposition for receiving it to their Benefit.

Here we have a plain Answer to all such remaining Questions, copied in the beginning of the preceding Chapter, from the Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* as have not before been particularly satisfied, viz. "Where there is no Law, there can be no Transgression; and an unknown Law is the same with no Law. Why is not whatever concerns all, equally knowable by all?" For wherever the Christian Law is not known, it is through the Fault of those who have it not revealed to them; and because they make themselves incapable of being bettered by it. Yea, such is their Disposition, through their own Fault, that the want of it, is some degree of Compassion, as it prevents their greater Condemnation by the abuse of it. And their final Punishment will flow, not from the breach of any Gospel Law; but from their abusing the Means they enjoy; and thereby depriving themselves of any benefit by the Gospel: Which tho' it doth equally concern them, as well as those who enjoy it, and they have equal need of it; yet they keep it at a distance from themselves, by not improving duly the Means they enjoy, and thereby becoming in the proper Disposition to be bettered by it. Many Nations have enjoyed it, that are now deprived of it, through their own Fault. "They did not need to leave their Country, and rove endlessly up and down in search of Necessary Truth, (as this Author doth ironically talk.) No. When they were better disposed, the Messengers of God did carry it to their Door, in Obedience to the Commission they received, *Go and teach all Nations, &c.* Many Nations have abused it, and therefore now do want it: When God sees their Disposition fitted

“fitted for it, it will doubtless be restored, without
 “need of leaving their Country, and roving endlessly
 “up and down in search; and without the insupera-
 “ble Labour of being ever examining into all the
 “Traditionary Religions they can come at, and yet
 “remaining in a perpetual State of Uncertainty.”

The Straying Sheep will soon discern *the Voice of the true Shepherd*, and be gathered into his Fold.

And that I may now proceed to the only Intricacy yet remaining, relating to the want of an Universal Manifestation of the Gospel, I further add, with regard to the *Pagan World*, as followeth.

§. II. That from the Infinite Mercy of God it may be well expected, That by the Merit and Mediation of our Saviour, there will be some Degrees of Tenderness, and Mitigation of the strict Rigour of Justice, extended even unto them. This hath been well expressed in the few following Words, by the eminent Bishop *Gibson*, in his Remarks upon *Dr. Clark's Exposition of the Church Catechism*, Pag. 30. Lond. 1730. viz. “Allowances doubtless
 “will be made for want of Capacity, Opportunity,
 “and insuperable Difficulties. As to the Strength
 “of which, and how far they are pleadable at the
 “Bar of Judgment, and before a Merciful Judge,
 “we are not commissioned, nor qualified to deter-
 “mine: but must leave to the All-knowing God.”
 I ought not here to omit the Praises due to this Learned Prelate, from Posterity, as well as the present Age; by the distinguished Care of the great *Depositum*, becoming an Angel of the Church, so seasonably exerted by him, in the strenuous Defence of our Holy Religion, against the bold Assaults of Infidelity.

As to *Pagan Infants* who die before they have attained to the exercise of Reason, it were a harsh

Doctrine to exclude them from all benefit of our Saviour's Redemption. The Church of *England* hath declared Her Sentiment, with regard to the Infants of Christians, thus far, *viz.* "It is certain by God's Word, that Children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved." But She hath no where determined, that in the want of Baptism, they do certainly perish. 'Tis true, the Right which the unbaptized Children of Believing Parents have to the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace, makes a difference in their Favour: Yet it is not impossible that some Degrees of Compassion, by the Mediation of a Saviour, who is the *propitiation for our Sins; and not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the whole World;* (1 Jo. ii. 2.) may be extended also, throughout the whole World, to all Infants whatsoever. *In my Father's House,* saith Christ, *there are many Mansions: I go to prepare a place for you,* (Jo. xiv. 2.) And who dare peremptorily say, it is not in his Power, or his Will, to prepare some such Mansion there, even for *Pagan Infants*, as may be an everlasting Manifestation of his Glorious Redemption?

Again, yet farther, altho' in the Christian Church, the actual Faith in Adult Persons, is necessary to entitle to Salvation; yet the absolute Incapacity of *Idiots*, is charitably presumed, to render their Case favourable with God. And the Parity of Reason, states many of those who are naturally Deaf and Dumb much in the same Case. So that even they who never heard of *Jesus Christ*, may have some respective share of the Redemption purchased by him. And surely it is not impossible, that some Degrees of a suitable Compassion, in such proportion as pleaseth God, may for Christ's sake, be extended to those in the same Incapacities, among the rest of Mankind. And the silence of the Holy Scriptures,

with

with regard to such, obligeth us, modestly and charitably to leave them to the Divine Disposal, which can never fail to be both Just and Merciful.

§. III. And now, all the remaining difficulty relating to the *Pagan* World, seems to be brought into this narrow Compass, *viz.*

What shall be the final State of those Adult Heathens, who in their Generation, have been distinguished Examples of Probity and shining Lights in their respective Ages, both by their Doctrine and Example, as the great and useful Instructors of Mankind, the renowned Masters of Moral Science? Are there none even of those Worthies to be saved? Or can it be pretended, that none of them were of a proper Disposition to receive any greater Manifestations and Aids than they enjoyed; at least in some such Degrees of Divine Revelation as were necessary? Of such Revelation and such Aids, as we have before observed, from their Writings, they were vehemently longing for, and thirsting after?

The *Calvinists*, agreeably to their own System, make small Account of this Difficulty. Some of their Learned Authors do frankly drop all thoughts of any regard in God, to the Salvation of those Famous Men, accounting their brightest Virtues as only (*splendida peccata*) Glittering Iniquity; because they did not proceed from a Principle of Faith, and had not the Glory of God, for their only End: Pleading upon the two Maxims of the Moral Philosophy, *viz.* That there can be no real Virtue, but what doth proceed (*a debito principio, ad debitum finem*) from a right Principle, to a due End: And (*Bonum ex integris causis; Malum ex quolibet defectu*) that no Action can be denominated Morally Good, if it is not absolutely perfect, without the least Defect.

But under favour of those who plead in this manner: Although it is allowed, that in the strictness of Rigour, all Mankind, and all their Actions, in this frail Life, have their Impurities and Blemishes; yet as the Persons, and imperfect Obedience of the Faithful, find acceptance with God, for the sake of their Saviour; so, why may not the benefit of his Universal Redemption, be so far extended, as to procure some degrees of Acceptance, even to those who have not attained to the Christian Faith, upon the due improvement of the Means and Opportunities they enjoy; as we are expressly told, it fared in the Case of *Cornelius* the Centurion? His Prayers, Alms, and Fasting, had their degrees of Acceptance, even before he had the Manifestation of the Gospel, or had thereby attained the Christian Faith.

However, that *Cornelius*, with his *Kinsmen* and *near Friends* whom he had *call'd together*, (*Acts x.*) having the proper Disposition, had *St. Peter* sent to impart the Gospel of Salvation to them: This may seem indeed to favour the Scheme we have pleaded. But what say we to the Case of *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Pythagoras*, *Epicetus*, &c. were not they in a Disposition for receiving whatever Divine Revelation and Spiritual Aids, could be necessary? yet there was neither Angel nor Apostle sent to them.

The Answer is, *First*, That how far their Case was equal to that of *Cornelius*, is only known to God: And therefore nothing can be concluded from their want of Revelation for affording more Light than they enjoyed.

2dly, If we should even suppose their Case was equal; yet, if the Case of Mankind, their Contemporaries was such, that the full Manifestation of all that Light, which these had a due Disposition to receive, would have only increased the Guilt and Condemnation of the Ages and Countries they lived in;

in; Was it not congruous to the Divine Goodness to have some regard to this? and to reserve his greater Manifestations to such times as they might be of benefit to Mankind, in a better Disposition for them; and in less danger of abusing them, to the encrease of their Guilt and Condemnation? And thus, a rational account may be given, for the various degrees of Divine Revelation from the fall of Man, and downward. In what measure it was vouchsafed to the ancient Patriarchs, before the time of *Moses*, we cannot certainly determine from the short Accounts in the Book of *Genesis*, which is the only extant Memoirs of those Ages; excepting only that our Saviour tells us, *Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it and was glad*: And that the Author to the *Hebrews* (Chap. xi. 13, 14, 15.) saith, *These all died in faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a Country; — a better Country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God — hath prepared for them a City.* Yet by this we plainly see, they had the Faith in the promised *Messiah*, they saw his Day afar off, rejoiced and were glad; having seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and received them. And doubtless they had as much revealed, as did consist with the Disposition of Mankind in their respective Ages. And with regard to the Ages under the Law of *Moses*, from him, and downwards to the days of our Saviour in the Flesh, as *St. Paul* saith, (Gal. iii. 24, 25.) *the Law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.* A *Pedagogie* necessary to prepare and dispose for the receiving of the Gospel, and thereby such fulness of Revelation, that embracing it, we are no longer under a *Schoolmaster*. Now it was in the

the time of this *Pedagogie*, that those mentioned Philosophers did flourish; and tho' they were not within the pale of the Jewish Church, yet from the History of their times, lame and defective as it is, we have some Hints afforded, that they had received Light and Improvement by the Books of *Moses*, and the other Jewish Authors: And the Traces of this, in their few extant Writings, go far to make it manifest.

They were certainly great Lights in their respective times: And doubtless God did not leave himself without some other Witnesses also, in other Nations as well as in *Greece*; tho' their Names and Writings have not been transmitted unto us. And having lived in the times of the Jewish *Pedagogie*, before the World was ripened and prepared for the Gospel, when the *Veil of Moses* had place: It was by favour of the Divine Care and Providence, if they attained such measure of the Light enjoyed by the Jewish Nation, as God saw proper in their State. Even before the *Wall of partition was broken down*, when the Jewish Nation was the *Peculium*; and before the calling of the Gentiles to the benefit of the Gospel; we ought not to think, that God had quite abandoned all Care of the Salvation of the rest of Mankind. In two of the Evangelists (*Matt. xv. & Mar. vii.*) we have a passage recorded that is exceedingly to this purpose, *viz.* A Woman of *Canaan*, a *Greek*, a *Syrophenician* by Nation; whose Daughter was vexed with a Devil; came to our Saviour, who had then retired into the Coasts of *Tyre and Sidon*; and out of the same Coasts she came and cried, saying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my Daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil: But he answered her not a word. And his Disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, she crieth after us. But he answered and said,*

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I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the Childrens bread, and cast it to Dogs. And she said, Truth Lord, yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs which fall from their masters table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O Woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her Daughter was made whole from that very hour.

And we are also told (in *Matt. viii. and Luke vii.*) of a Centurion who came and besought Jesus in behalf of his Servant, sick of the Palsy and grievously tormented, of whom our Saviour said to them that followed, *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel. And, I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the Children shall be cast into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

From these Passages, which are pat to our purpose, we plainly see, the Maxim (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*) no Salvation out of the Church, is not to be stretched farther, than that it is rare, and with greater difficulty; tho' the Romish have, with much other *Hay and Stubble*, adopted it, even as it is screwed to the utmost, into the system of their Faith; and confining the Church too, to those of their Party. And then with regard to the mentioned Philosophers, and other Pagans of like Probity, altho' we should not suppose them to have been equal to the *Syrophœnician Woman*, and the Centurion mentioned, yet it were hard to grudge them the Crumbs that might fall from their Master's Table, in such measure; as altho' they should not be of the number of the many that shall come from the East and West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven;
yet

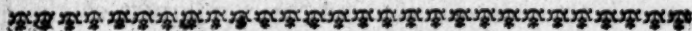
yet so as to render them capable of some degrees of future Happiness, in such Mansions as may sute their State. That they had in some degrees attained to the knowledge of the Revelations by *Moses* and the Prophets is more than probable; that they had made much Improvement is evident; and tho' their Blemishes are obvious from the Accounts we have of them in sundry Instances, yet it were hard to reckon them quite excluded from the Mercy of God and the Merit of our Saviour. That the measure of the Faith required is only in proportion to the Revelation received, seems to be a plausible Maxim*, and a weaker Faith may admit of a smaller Reward.

The Reader will observe, That I have not yet needed a recourse to the Caution which I designedly entered at my first setting out, to assert the absolute necessity of the Divine Revelation (*Chap. 4. §. 1.*) viz. *Unless God is pleased to supply the want of it, in some other uncommon and unknown way.* And indeed this is such a safe and solid Retreat, as, if it were needful, could not be disputēd: For who can set Bounds to the Ways of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness? And if God is pleased in some distinguished, tho' *uncommon and unknown way*, to shew special Favour to some, even Pagans, of a special happiness of Disposition; Shall our *Eye be evil, because he is good?* Yet if there are such special Exceptions, they serve rather to confirm to us, than to weaken our Conviction, with regard to the general Rule of the Divine Conduct, in carrying on the Salvation of Mankind, as it is established by his Holy Word; according to the Maxim that obtains in all Sciences (*Exceptio firmat Regulum;*) The common Rule is strengthened by some few Exceptions. However, in accounting for the equity of the Divine Conduct in the necessity of Di-

* *Revelatio Divina est mensura Fidei.*

Ch. 2: A P P E N D I X. 13

vine Revelation, even with regard to Pagans, we have not yet been obliged to have recourse to this Retreat, and Time will shew, if any Objections may arise, to drive us to it. Withal I have some reason to think, we have already had under our Consideration, the strongest Objections that can be suggested upon this Subject.



C H A P. II.

A short View of the Divine Care to manifest the knowledge of Himself, and of his Will, by Revelation, throughout the several Ages of the World; and more particularly of universal Tradition.

§. I. **W**Hen our first Parents had fallen from their Innocency, into a state of Sin and Misery, the Remorse and Shame of their hainous Guilt, and the woful Infirmities of Soul and Body thereby contracted, made them, in Terror and Confusion, seek to hide themselves from the Presence of God, amongst the Trees of the Garden. In this hopeless state of Horrör and Perplexity, the offended God calls them, and mercifully suspends the Sentence of Death they lay under; to afford space for Repentance, with a renewed Hope of being restored to his Favour and the integrity of their Nature, by the gracious Promise, that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Serpent: In which all the Benefits by the Mediator are implied, and among the rest, the aid of the Divine Grace, to supply the weakness of decayed

cayed Reason, and enable and direct it to govern the now unruly and disordered Passions and Affections. We cannot doubt that all this was distinctly understood, tho' now we are left to gather it from the sum and contexture of the Revelation we enjoy.

What is related by *Moses* in *Gen. iii.* is so exceeding short, that we can neither tell how far the Memory of our first Parents might retain the Impressions of their Knowledge in the brightness of their primitive State, which they lost so soon? nor, How far they were thereafter Instructed by God, when driven out of Paradise to till the Ground? Only it is evident from the fourth Chapter, that they had been taught to offer Sacrifices of the Fruit of the Ground, and of the Firstlings and Fat of the Flock; and that by some perceptible Indication, they then understood, when God had, and when he had not, respect to their Offerings; which was accordingly as they were accompanied with Faith and Righteousness: For God saith to *Cain*, *If thou dost well shalt thou not be accepted*; and *Hebr. xi. 4.* *By Faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his Gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh.*

Even the Murderer *Cain* had the Mercy of space for Repentance, tho' God drove him from the Society of his Parents and Brethren, who were doubtless by that time multiplied, being at least 120 Years from the Creation, if not 100 more, according to the *Septuagint*: And he also had a numerous Posterity in his Life-time; for he built a City in the Land of *Nod*, on the East of Eden, and called the Name of it after the Name of his Son, *Enoch*. We have the Names of the Chiefs of his Descent, in a Series unto *Jabal* and *Jubal* and *Tubalcain*, the Sons of *Lamech*, by his two Wives *Adah* and *Zillah*; who may have lived

lived to the time of the Deluge. And we have a Proof that the knowledge of the true God, and the Conviction of the demerit of hainous Sin, and of a Divine Providence, was not obliterated in that *Lamech's* Time, but had been preserved by Tradition, even among *Cain's* Posterity, in these Words of *Lamech*, *Hear my voice ye Wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech, I have slain a man, ----- If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

Adam who lived 930 Years, did certainly Instruct his Posterity in all the necessary knowledge of God, and their Duty to Him; and it was easy for the Tradition of this to be preserved, more especially among a Godly Series of his Offspring by *Seth*, down to *Noah*; for if *Methusalah* did not live some hundreds of Years with *Adam*, according to the *Hebrew* Account, yet he could not fail to be well Instructed by Godly *Enoch* his Father, who was translated alive into Heaven, with whom he lived above 130 Years; and he also lived with *Enoch's* Father, *Jared*; and with *Mahalaleel* *Enoch's* Grandfather, who did both of them survive *Enoch's* Translation some hundreds of Years; and then *Noah* was Cotemporary with his Grandfather *Methusalah* near 600 Years. So that tho' we should follow the Chronology of the *Septuagint*, yet even by oral Tradition the Knowledge and Worship of the true God was easily preserved and conveyed down to *Noah*, altho' renewed Revelation had not often intervened, made to the Godly Patriarchs of the Race of *Seth*, as we are certain it did to *Enoch* and *Noah*.

But altho' in this Period from *Adam* to *Noah*, God was not wanting in the Revelation necessary to Mankind, yet in *Noah's* Days the Corruption was so universal, that there was but one Righteous Family left, *Noah* and his three Sons; and therefore
God.

God resolved to sweep them all away by an universal Deluge, excepting those few Righteous, preserved to people the World again; and to be living Witnesses to the new World, of the Justice and Providence of God: And to convey the Knowledge of God, and of Man's Duty to him, to following Generations; by a continuing Tradition; and by their endeavour to convey that Knowledge and Tradition down, with the History of the terrible and awful Destruction from which they had been rescued, to be living Monuments of the Mercy and Favour of God, to those who truly serve and worship him.

Yet such was the long-suffering of God, even to the wicked World who perished; that they had solemn warning by *Noah*, the *Preacher of Righteousness*. God may as justly destroy a whole World of Sinners, as punish or cut off one single Sinner. Yet *Noah* was 100 Years in preparing the Ark, and all this time giving warning of the approaching Ruin, and exhorting to Repentance and Amendment: But all in vain; they would not believe; until *Noah* was shut up in the Ark. But when they saw the Flood gradually advancing, they could not fail then to know the meaning of it, and of the warnings of *Noah*. And as the gradual Advance afforded yet some short time for Repentance, who can tell that many did not, even then, repent? or that all who might sincerely do so, were excluded from the Divine Mercy in the other World; tho' it could not prevent their perishing in the Waters? And if it was so; the Deluge did mercifully serve to save all in the old World that could be brought to Repentance, as well as to reform the new World.

§. II. *Noah*, who became a second Stock and Original of the common Race of all Mankind;
upon

upon his coming out of the Ark, the first thing he did, was to offer a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving to God, for the deliverance of himself and his Family. He lived 350 Years after the Flood, and thereby had long opportunity to instruct his numerous Posterity in the Knowledge of God, and their Duty to him; the particular Branches of the Doctrine he propagated to them, are not related in the compendious History of *Moses*: But surely they were all that God thought necessary then to reveal to Mankind. The *Jews* have unanimously agreed in a Tradition of six Precepts, given to the Sons of *Adam*; viz. "1. That they should worship no false God. 2. That they should worship the one living and true God: Offer Sacrifices, Prayers and Praises, to him for his Blessings, and glorify his Name. 3. To have Magistrates to minister Justice uprightly, and to obey them duly. 4. To set bounds to Lust, and avoid Marriages within the forbidden degrees of Propinquity. 5. Not to shed Blood, or be guilty of *Homicide*. 6. To avoid Theft and Rapine; and to do by others, as we would have them to do to us." And they tell us, these were renewed to the Sons of *Noah*, with the addition of a seventh. Precept, viz. That which is recorded *Gen. ix. 4.* *But Flesh with the Life thereof, which is the Blood thereof, ye shall not eat.* By which, the *Jews* have conceived, all eating of Blood to be prohibited.

We cannot doubt of his conveying, in concurrence with his Sons, to their Posterity, the Knowledge of the infinite God, as the Creator of the World, and as Ruler thereof by his Providence. The very destroying it by the Deluge, did prove, it was he who made it; and the preserving of themselves, was an Evidence of his Providence, and of the Care he hath of those who duly serve him, as well as the Power to punish without controul. The pre-

serving of the several Species of living Creatures, and the destruction of the bulk of them, which otherwise, by the Multitude of devouring Beasts, would have been destructive to the surviving human Remnant; were proofs of the Wisdom of his Providence.

However, all the Care *Noah* could take, or his virtuous Sons, and their Posterity that had most of Virtue, whom they had lived to be instructing for Hundreds of Years; with all the awful Impressions of the terrible Vengeance upon the Wickedness of the old World by the Deluge; did not hinder their Posterity to become exceedingly corrupted; insomuch that in the space of about 300 Years, according to the *Hebrew Chronology*, and not much above 500, according to the *Septuagint*, the Divine Interposul, to give check to their increasing Wickedness, by another notable Judgment, became necessary, viz. By the Confusion of Tongues at *Babel*, in the Plain of *Shinar*, Gen. xi. This is so briefly related by *Moses*, that we cannot see into all the Circumstances and Reasons of it. Only we find, that tho' God had commanded to replenish the Earth; which could not be, without dispersing themselves, as their Numbers did encrease; yet their design was, (ver. 4.) to prevent their being scattered abroad upon the face of the whole Earth; and by a vainglorious Affectation of future Fame, to make themselves a Name with Posterity. This miraculous Judgment, was as plain an Evidence of the Divine Power, as the Deluge it self: And the Awe of it was universal. For the whole Earth, that before had but one Language, was there gathered together. And from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad, (ver. 9.) to replenish the Earth. And their dispersion into 72 Tribes of different Languages, gave a great restraint to the spreading of the Contagion of Wickedness, which had chiefly begun

begun among the Posterity of *Ham*, and would otherwise have soon become universal.

From this time, to the Days of *Abraham*, which included the space only of 300 Years, according to the *Hebrew Chronology*, but of more than 600 according to the *Septuagint*; in all that Interval, the Scripture affords nothing more, but the Names, Ages and Deaths, of those Patriarchs from whom *Abraham* descended. And then we find the World overspread with *Idolatry*. They had retained the sense of a Deity and a Providence: For *Atheism* was not heard of in the World for many Ages afterward; yet the Knowledge and Worship of the one supreme God, was in danger of being utterly lost; and the Lives of Men to be intirely corrupted, by the obscene and filthy Rites of their Idolatrous Worship. And the Awe and Terroure of the mentioned Judgments having proved ineffectual, it became necessary for the Divine Care, to take another Course, *viz.* By chusing *Abraham* and his Posterity, to be his peculiar People, and governed by him in so visible a manner, that all the World might know, and fear the God of *Israel*.

In *Chaldea*, even the Race from *Seth* to *Abraham*, was infected; as is evident from *Josh. xxiv. 2.* *Your Fathers dwelt on the other side the Flood in old time, even Terah, the Father of Abraham, and the Father of Nachor, and served other Gods.* There the Worship of the heavenly Luminaries, and of their dead Kings, and their Images, prevailed. In *Egypt* it was worse, they had become so brutally degenerated in the multiplying of their Idols, as to worship the very *Beasts*.

In this general Defection and Apostasy of Mankind, the Remains of any true Religion and fear of God, seem to have been mostly in the Land of *Canaan*, when *Abraham* was called by God to sojourn

there. For there we find *Melchisedech*, a King of *Salem*, and Priest of the most high God, to whom *Abraham* offered *Tythes*. And by the short History of *Genesis*, in his Time, and the Days of his Son, *Isaac*, we may observe the Traces of this Remainder in a *Pharaoh*, the then King of *Egypt*, and more particularly in *Abimelech*, King of *Gerar*. (Gen. xx.) altho' it is plain, from the 11th verse of that Chapter, that the People of *Gerar* were degenerated; And in another *Abimelech*, also King of *Gerar*, (Gen. xxvi.) And there-after in the Posterity of *Ishmael*, and of the Sons of *Abraham*, by *Keturah*; and in the Posterity of *Esau*; which in all, became many and great Nations; God raised up, and doubtless long continued, many Witnesses for himself: And among these, (probably after the Days of *Jacob*, and before the Time of *Moses*, the supposed Author of the Book of *Job*;) *Job*, and his three Friends, seem to have been eminent. And even in the Days of *Moses*, his Father-in-law *Jethro*, and *Balaam*, had the Knowledge of the true God, whom they worshipped. And in all the Parts of the inhabited Earth, it is likely there might be some, to witness for the true God, more or less. In like manner, as in the Days of the Prophet *Elijah*; when he thought the Defection of his own Nation was universal; yet there were *seven thousand whose Knees had not bowed to Baal*, (1 Kings xix.) and whose Mouths had not kissed him. And even after *Joshua's* Death, *Adonibezek*, (Judg. i.) haughty and cruel as he was, is observed in his Calamity to own the Justice of the Divine Providence. *Threescore and ten Kings, having their Thumbs and their Great Toes cut off, gathered their meat under my Table. As I have done, so God hath required me.*

However, as I said before, the Way that infinite Wisdom judged best, for preventing the universal

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Apostasy of Mankind, and the Knowledge and Worship of himself, from being universally lost; and thereby gradually so to prepare the World, as in due time, to bring about the Reformation of Mankind; was, by chusing *Abraham* and his Posterity, to be governed by himself, as his own peculiar People; in so visible a manner, and in the Center of the then inhabited World, that all the World might know, and fear the God of *Israel*.

And in this Case, altho' many Degrees of a discriminating Favour to one Family and Nation could not be avoided, in the natural Course of Things to occur. Yet as this is no ways inconsistent with God's universal Care and Love of Mankind; so it did evidently flow from, and was plainly the effect of, his universal Divine Care and Love. The *Jews* indeed, like our *Deists* now, did ignorantly misconstrue this, as partial dealing. Yea, the very Apostles did so, till they were taught (*Acts* x. 34. and xi. 18.) *that God is no respecter of Persons; But in every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him.*

The infinite God, who knows the Hearts of all Men, chose *Abraham*, to be *the Father of the faithful*, as well as of the *Jewish Nation*; of whom he says, (*Gen.* xviii. 19.) *For I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, &c.* And the Proof he gave of a proper Fitness and Disposition, testifies the Wisdom of the Divine Choice. Careful was he to convey this down to his Posterity; and because the Promise was, (*Gen.* xvii. 19. and xxi.) *Thou shalt call his Name Isaac, and I will establish my Covenant with him. My Covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee, at this set time in the next Year. And in him, all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed.* (*Gen.* xxii. 18.

and xxvi. 4.) Therefore we find the special Care he took to keep *Isaac* by him. As he survived, to be instructing him, until he was 75 Years old; so to prevent all danger of his being corrupted, he would not send him to *Mesopotamia* to get a Wife for himself; but sent his Servant that ruled over all he had, to find and bring a Wife for him, from among his own Kindred. To *Ishmael*, and the Sons he had by his Wife *Keturah*, of whom Nations were also raised, he gave Portions; and sent them away from his Son *Isaac*, while he yet lived, (*Gen. xxv.*) But *Isaac* was his Heir, and his principle Care: As he, in whose Posterity the True Religion was to be preserved in the World, for the benefit of Mankind.

We cannot think *Abraham's* Care to preserve the true Religion, was altogether confined to his own House; but his exemplary Virtue, and shining Piety, gave Luster to his Religion. The encrease of his Greatness, by which he became a mighty Prince, (*Gen. xxiii. 6.*) rendered his Probity the more conspicuous. He did not dissemble his Religion: For when he returned Victorious over *Chedorlaomer*, and the confederate Kings that were with him, he solemnly payed Tythes to *Melchizedech*, King of *Salem*, and Priest of the most High God. His sojourning through divers Countries, afforded occasion to recommend his Religion. And the same was the Case with his Successors, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*.

Joseph's Advancement in *Egypt*, both before, and after he brought his Father and his Brethren thither, afforded all of them Opportunity to instruct that Nation, (if the *Egyptians* had hearkened) in the Knowledge and Worship of the true God. And *Egypt* seems then to have been the most potent Nation of the World.

§. III. When their Posterity had multiplied in *Egypt*, they were oppressed with such Barbarity and Cruelty, as did not recommend the Religion of the Country to them. But to prevent their Apostasy, as well as to rescue them from the Bondage, *Moses* was sent by God to be their Deliverer, with such mighty Wonders, and such an Overthrow of the *Egyptians*, as could not fail to draw the Observation of all the Inhabitants of the Earth; which was not then peopled to distances vastly remote, as plainly appears, by the Pasturage being common; even in *Canaan* (tho' one of the Countries early inhabited) to the time that *Jacob* and his Sons went to dwell in *Egypt*.

The subsisting so many hundred thousands, during 40 Years, in a barren Wilderness, was a Miracle so astonishing, that all adjacent Nations must have observed the infinite Power of the God who did it. And during that time, the *Jewish Law* was given, and the Worship of the *Tabernacle* instituted.

The awful and exceeding Solemnity in which the *Law* was given; the Institutions that were typical of the *Messiah*, promised (as before observed) to *Adam*, *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, in whom all the Nations of the Earth are blessed; the Institutions Ceremonial, design'd as preservative from the Idolatries of *Egypt*, and other adjacent Nations; and all the Moral Precepts; had all of them plainly the universal benefit of Mankind in their View. In a word, that other Nations of the World were to observe and learn from the œconomy of God with regard to them, is expressly intimated by *Moses*, (*Deut. iv. 6.*) *Keep therefore and do them, for it is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the Nations, which shall hear of all these Statutes and say, Surely this great Nation is a wise and understanding People.* For

what Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things which we call upon him for; and hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous? — Take ye therefore good heed, — lest ye corrupt your selves, and make you a graven Image, &c. and lest thou lift up thine Eyes to Heaven, and when thou seest the Sun, Moon, and Stars, — and worship them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all Nations under the whole Earth. — Know ye therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, he is God in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath; and there is none else. And again, (*Deut. xxix.*) after mention of the Calamities to be suffered by them upon their Disobedience, *ver. 24.* *Even all Nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this Land? — then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the Covenant of the Lord God of their Fathers, which he made with them, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other Gods, and worshipped them, &c.*

And in the Days of *David* and *Solomon*, when their Dominion was vastly extended, the Knowledge of the true God, could not fail to be conveyed to the remotest Regions. The report of *Solomon's Wisdom and his Glory*, drew the Queen of *Sheba*, or *Ethiopia*, to his Court, and the magnificence of the Temple of *Jerusalem*, raised the wonder and observation of the whole World: And it is remarkable, that even in it, there was the Court of the *Gentiles*. And long before this, had not *Rahab of Jericho*, and *Ruth of Moab*, been Mothers in *Israel*? Yea, and the Daughter of *Jethro* too?

All the conspicuous Vicissitudes of the notable Prosperity and Adversity of that People, throughout the History of the Old Testament, accordingly as they were, or were not, faithful toward the true God,
and

and his Worship, were intimations to adjacent Nations; and some of them most eminently. As when the King of Syria found (2 Kings 6.) *that his most secret designs* were notified to the King of Israel by *Elisha*, and sent his Army, Horses and Chariots, and a great Host, by night, to carry off the Prophet; and they were all made blind, and led by *Elisha* into *Samaria*, into the hands and power of the King of Israel, and dismissed in safety, to witness and declare the Fact. And in Chapters, v, vii, xix. of that same Book, The cure of *Naaman's* Leprosy; The flight of the Syrian Army that besieged *Samaria*; and, The destruction of *Sennacherib's* Army which besieged *Jerusalem*, of whom 185,000 were slain by an Angel in one Night; tended all of them, to spread the Knowledge and awful Regard of the God of Israel.

The final dispersion of the ten Tribes; and the long Captivity of *Judah*, by which they were also dispersed throughout the Provinces of the *Babylonish* Empire for 70 Years; did serve to spread the Knowledge of the true God, throughout the Earth, (if Mankind would have listened) especially in the Court and Metropolis of *Babylon*, in the Days of *Daniel*, *Mordecai*, *Esther*, &c.

During the Kingdoms of Israel and *Judah*, occasions were afforded of sending Prophets to remote Countries. Of this, we have one notable Instance, of *Jonah*, sent to preach with success, unto the great City *Nineveh*, the Seat of an Empire, and wherein there were more than sixscore thousand, that did not know their right hand, and their left.

Tho' there were no more, yet what is said might serve to testify the Divine continued Care to have the true Knowledge of himself, and of his Worship, manifested unto Mankind; and that his special Favour to the *Jewish* Nation, flowed truly from an uni-

universal Benevolence to the whole Race. And what can be more exprest than these words of St. Paul? (Rom. ix. 29.) *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.* But all that I point unto, is still more and more verified, in the continued History of the Old Testament.

The astonishing Transaction, by which the haughty Pride of the Great *Nebuchadnezzar* was humbled; and he again restored and established in his Kingdom, and *excellent Majesty added to him*; must needs have given an awful Attention to the then World: Especially upon the sense of it, which he did himself solemnly utter, (*Dan. iv.*) *I blessed the most high, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol the honour of the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.* And in the foregoing Chapter, when *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, came forth safe from the Furnace of fire, and not an hair of their Head singed, nor their Coats changed, nor the smell of fire on them, which had no power upon their bodies, in the sight and presence of the Princes, and Captains, and the King's Counsellors, being gathered together. Then *Nebuchadnezzar* spake and said, *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his Angel, and delivered his Servants that trusted in him. — Therefore I make a Decree, That every People, Nation, and Language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God, that can deliver after this sort.* And what could be more effectual to spread the Knowledge and Fear of the true God, through People,
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Nations, and Languages, even beyond the extent of that vast Empire?

And did not the Fate of *Belshazzar*, give a further push? (*Dan. v.*) who perished so suddenly after the *Hand writing on the Wall*, with the conspicuous Circumstances of awful Terroure, Because *he lifted up himself against the God of Heaven, In whose hand (says Daniel to him) thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways: thou hast not glorified him: but brought the vessels of his House before thee; thou, and thy Lords, thy Wives, and thy Concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the Gods of Silver and Gold, of Brass, Iron, Wood, and Stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know.* If Mankind would not regard; if all this had no better effect, than the falling of the Idol *Dagon*, before the Ark of God, had upon the *Philistines*; yet what more would Men desire God to have done on his part, if Man is to be dealt with as a free Agent? However, soon after this, when *Darius the Mede* was advanced to the Throne of *Babylon*, and *Daniel* rescued from the *Den of Lions*, that had a Stone upon the mouth of it, and the King had sealed it with his own Signet, and the Signet of his Lords, who had contrived the Snare; another solemn Decree was issued. (*Dan. vi. 15.*) Then King *Darius* wrote unto all People, Nations, and Languages, that dwell in all the Earth, Peace be multiplied. I make a Decree, that in every Dominion of my Kingdom, Men tremble and fear before the God of *Daniel*: For he is the living God, and stedfast for ever; and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed; and his Dominion shall be even unto the End. He delivereth and rescueth, &c.

And when the vast Empire was translated unto *Cyrus the Persian*, of whom *Isaiah* had so long before foretold by Name, that he should become the Restorer of the *Jews* from their Captivity, (*Isa. xlv. 28.*) they

they did accordingly return to their own Country, and rebuild the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*. And it is remarkable, that altho' they became exceedingly corrupted, yet they never thereafter could be enticed unto Idolatry. And this was one *Point* of importance, which the Divine provident Care had gained, to keep up in the World the Knowledge and Worship of the *One true God*; that it should not be quite extinguished. That so, even from that corrupted Nation, the more perfect Knowledge and Worship of the *One true God*, might at length, be spread throughout the World.

§. IV. The nearer to the times of the promised *Messiah*, the Prophecies relating to him, in the Books of the *Jewish* Nation, were still the more clear. As in *Psalms*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, &c. And the *Jews*, after their first dispersion, were a People addicted to Traffick; and having a Zeal for their own Religion, adhered stily to it, wheresoever they sojourned, either in pursuit of Gain, or when they were carried into Captivity: And thereby they could not miss to carry the Knowledge of the God they served, into various Regions. Their Neighbours of *Tyre*, and *Sidon*, and all the *Phenicians*, were an ingenious and trading People; and could not be ignorant of the Religion of the *Jews*, and of their Books. Both sides of the *Mediterranean Sea*, and the Islands thereof, had received Colonies from *Egypt*, and *Phenicia*. It was from these that *Greece* it self, had the Knowledge of Letters, Mechanical Arts and Instruments, and Navigation: Which were not known there, above three or four Generations before the *Trojan* War. And here I may mark, by the way, that the lateness of the Knowledge of these, in *Europe*, as well as the want of any more antient certain History, is an evidence of the truth of the

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Mosaick Accounts of the Creation, and the Deluge. But what I chiefly aim at, is this, That when Humanity, Curiosity, and Learning, began to be cultivated in *Greece*, the inquisitive Wits there, who before had Hints of Things, by means of the mentioned Colonies, repairing for Knowledge to *Phœnicia*, and *Egypt*, received Instruction from the *Jewish* Books: Which they so cultivated, as to make the *Grecian* Moral Philosophy to excell, even under an Idolatrous *Pagan* Superstition; though blended with those Errors that did flow from their imperfect Knowledge of some fundamental and chief Springs of Moral Duty.

And by such turns of Providence as the Divine Care had ordered, chiefly from the *Jewish* Books, and perhaps too, by Heathen Oracles constrained to drop Things: Some how or other, so it happened, that near the time of the Manifestation of our Saviour, not only in the *Jewish* Nation, but throughout the World, there was an universal expectation of a Great King, and Saviour, to arise for the common benefit of Mankind; which partly did prepare the World for the reception of the Gospel. The famous Prophecies, relating to the Great Monarchies of *Assyria*, *Persia*, *Greece*, and *Rome*; and many other Kingdoms and States, throughout the Books of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Daniel*, with their eminent Accomplishment; did recommend the Use of the *Jewish* Books, not only to the great ones of the Earth, but to all the more curious, ingenious, and inquisitive.

If it did consist with the brevity proposed in this *Short View*, large sketches and vouchers might be collected from the most authentick antient prophane Historians, as well as the famous Philosophers and Poets, to verify the Hints briefly given in the two last foregoing Paragraphs; which I must wave at

present: And they are not *latent* to the Learned. But the short sketch and glance presented, in concurrence with what is drawn from the Old Testament, doth sufficiently evidence the merciful Care that God hath taken, in all the Ages, even before the Coming of our Saviour, to afford the Revelation necessary for the Knowledge of himself, and Man's Duty to him, if Mankind would have listened to it: And that all the Revelation to *Abraham*, and his Posterity, tho' specially to them, did however flow from the universal Care and Love of God, with regard to Mankind. The Account is heavy upon many Nations and People, by what share they have had: And to have received more, would have swell'd their reckoning.

§. V. But when the World became more ripe, and better disposed for the through and more perfect Manifestations, the Commission then given by *Jesus Christ*, (*Matt. xxviii. and Mar. xvi.*) is, *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, &c. And Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* (And *ver. 20. of St. Mark*) *And they went forth, and preached every where.* And as the *Psalmist* prophesied, (*Psal. lxviii. 11.*) *The Lord gave the word, and great was the Company of those who published it.* (See *Rom. x. 18. Psa. xix. 4.*) The Harvest was great, and the Prayers that the Lord of the Harvest would send forth Labourers, were effectual. *St. Paul*, (*Col. i.*) pretty early tells the *Colossians*, *The word of the truth of the Gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth Fruit.* We have Vouchers highly credible, of the swiftness of its Progress, even to the *Eastern Indies*, and the *British Isles*.

The Gift of Tongues, and Power of Miracles, with the Zeal and shining Piety of the numerous Labourers, in the first Ages of Christianity; and the

the Divine Blessing on their Labours; rendred the success of the Gospel so eminently wonderful; that, if duly pondered, it is it self, the greatest Miracle, and strongest Proof, of the Gospels Divine Original; next to the Resurrection of our Saviour, who raised himself from Death. Especially, considering that this was mostly, by the Labours of illiterate Instruments, and in direct opposition to all the Civil Powers; the Laws, the established Religions, and the human Learning of the then habitable World; as if they had been all in a joint Combination and Confederacy. A Miracle that doth alone, exceed all the Signs and Wonders wrought by *Moses*, in the Land of *Egypt*. And the Fact is incontestable, and evident to Mankind.

The fit and proper juncture of Time, the seasonable Opportunity, (in the words of the Holy Ghost, *The fulness of time*) was embraced and layed hold of, by infinite Wisdom, to give the most signal Proof of an impartial universal Benevolence to Mankind; when the Inhabitants of the Earth, were the most universally, in the proper Disposition, to listen, receive, and entertain the Gospel; and bring forth the due Fruits of it. And indeed, the Fruits of it then, were in some Ages, eminent. The View of primitive Christianity, that is given by the Learned Dr. *Cave*, from authentick Vouchers, gives Shame to modern Christians: But is an Evidence, that the Gospel duly entertained, *is the power of God unto Salvation*.

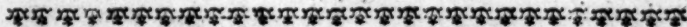
Men who are industrious to except against the Divine Conduct, as Revelation represents it, are ready to quarrel the partial Favour to the *Jewish* Nation. Whereas, truly they were no Nation, nor a People yet extant, when God chose them. When God entred into Covenant with *Abraham*, and his Seed; there was none but himself: And the rest of
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the World was intirely Idolatrous, or running headlong into Idolatry. And from an universal Love to Mankind, God raised up a Nation and People, to preserve the Knowledge and Worship of himself, for preventing an universal Apostasy : And that he might thence gradually extirpate Idolatry, and restore Mankind to a State of true Religion. Doth not the Gospel it self sufficiently cut off this invidious Objection, by preaching the universal extent of the benefit of our Saviour's Redemption ? *Who is the propitiation for our Sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the whole World ?* (1 Jo. ii. 2.) And that same Apostle in his Gospel (*Joh. xi. 49, 50.*) relates, that when the Council of the Jews was consulting against our Saviour ; *Cainaphas being High Priest that same Year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one Man should die for the people, and that the whole Nation perish not. And this spake he, not of himself, but being High Priest that Year, he prophesied, that Jesus should die for that Nation ; and not for that Nation only ; but that also he should gather into One, the Children of God that were scattered abroad.* But it were needless to multiply Citations of the New Testament on this head : For from the whole design and contexture of it, nothing can be more evident, than that the benefits by *Jesus Christ*, are equally extended to *Jews and Gentiles*, according to the antient Promise, *That in him all the Nations of the Earth are blessed.* And *Isa. xlix. 6.* applied *Acts xiii. 46.*

Great and Flourishing for some Ages, were the Christian Churches, throughout *Asia, Europe, and Africa.* In *Africa*, this was eminent exceedingly : But for the sinful abuse of Christian Revelation, God hath removed his Candlestick, the Light of the Gospel, from many Nations. And this Judgment hath been

been as eminent upon *Africa*, as their Felicity was formerly. A loud Warning to Nations, and People; who enjoy the Gospel, and abuse it. No People have for some Ages, enjoyed this Light in greater Purity, than the *English* Nation. May God grant all therein to lay to Heart, the danger of its being withdrawn: Which the spreading Infidelity, in a general want of the due Fruits of the Gospel, doth shrewdly threaten.

This compendious Deduction, and Hint of Facts, short as it is, doth sufficiently testify the Divine universal, and impartial Care, throughout all Ages; still to afford to Mankind, the Revelation *necessary* for the Knowledge of himself, and Man's Duty; in proportion to the Disposition Mankind have for receiving it with Profit.



C H A P. III.

The difficulty arising from the state of the Americans, more specially considered.

§. I. **T**HE only Difficulty that seems now to remain upon this Subject, is with regard to the New-found World in *America*; wherein, besides straggling Nations of Natives, there were two Great Empires, (*Mexico* and *Peru*) of vast extent and populous, that had long flourished, under Government, Laws, and Politicks, without the least Knowledge of, or Correspondence with, *Europe*, *Asia*, or *Africa*: And consequently, no intimations made to them of what had occurred in our greater World. How can this agree with the Account we have pretended to give,

give, of the universal impartial Benevolence and Divine Care? Had not God abandoned them, at least, without the possibility of any true Knowledge of himself, or any thing he had revealed?

I Answer, That although God hath often found it necessary to punish Nations, and sometimes by an utter Excision, with exterminating Judgments: Yet he never abandons any People that are suffered to live upon the Face of the whole Earth. When St. Paul, with Barnabas, came to Lystra, (Acts xiv.) and had miraculously cured a Man that had been a Creple from his Mother's Womb; upon which, *the People lift up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The Gods are come down to us, in the likeness of Men; calling Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. And the Priest of Jupiter, had brought Oxen and Garlands, and would have done sacrifice. Barnabas, and Paul, rent their Cloaths, and ran in among the People, crying out, we also are Men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities, unto the living God, who made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all things that are therein: who in time past, suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from Heaven; and fruitful Seasons, filling our hearts with Food and Gladness.* Again, (Acts xvii.) that same Apostle tells the Men of Athens, who were no less Idolatrous, that God who made the World, giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood, all Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. And then he mentions, the principal End of God, in doing all this, in the words following, (ver. 27.) *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find*

find him: tho' he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own Poets have said, (Menander) for we are also his Offspring. From all this we may plainly gather, That the *Americans* also, being of one Blood, and equally the Offspring of God, as well as the Idolatrous *Grecians*, to whom *St. Paul* did thus preach; they have never been abandoned by God, who still was doing them also good, making his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall upon them (which comprehends the bulk of temporal good Things) *filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness.* And doubtless for the same good End, *That they also should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.* For God doth incessantly, in all the turns of his Providence, endeavour to draw all Mankind to himself. If Men will cultivate the Advantages they enjoy, and thereby become capable of his further Favours, He is never wanting to find the way of communicating to them, whatever is necessary for their everlasting Felicity.

If we had any certain Accounts to resolve us, from what Regions of our older known World, the Natives of the various Climates of *America* have first come thither, it would be more easy to account for the Divine Conduct, with regard to them, upon the Scheme I have followed. This is a Question that hath long exercised the enquiry of the Ingenious, and divers Books have been published upon the Subject.

Some think this huge part of the Earth hath been cut off from some Place upon the North of our Great Continent, by such Inundations as hath sometimes formed several smaller Islands; and is (not improbably) conjectured to have happened to *Sicily* and *Great Britain*; which is the Opinion that doth best account for the Beasts, both wild and destructive, or tame and useful that are found there. Others think,

that at different times, Navigation hath accidentally carried Wanderers thither, who either could not, or would not, seek returning ; and that all memory of such Occurrences hath been lost, through the Ignorance of Letters to record them. And this Sentiment is plainly favoured: *First*, By the accidental manner, in which *Alphonsus Sanctius ab Huelva*, the Master of a Ship, trading with the *Canaries* and *Azores* Islands, was carried upon the *American* Coast, by falling into the Trade-winds, and being driven by them. He indeed, made shift to recover his way homeward, to *Madera* ; and being courteously entertained there, by *Christophorus Columbus* ; did in gratitude, impart to him, his Observations, and Discoveries : Which afforded the first Occasion of introducing the *Spaniards* thither. And what befel him, may have happened at different times to others, who have either by Necessity, or Choice, stayed there.

And, 2dly, This Sentiment is also further favoured, by the peculiar Customs, both Civil and Religious, that have been observed to obtain among the *American* People. Some of them especially, being such as have owed their beginning to solemn Institution ; which do expressly indicate a Descent and Extraction of that People, from those of our great Continent. A great Number of those Religious Customs being evidently *Jewish*, by the Institution of *Moses* ; others of them, as evidently Christian ; and others of them, no less plainly, derived from the *Phœnicians*, *Carthaginians*, or the *Pagans* of *Africa*, of later times. The Learned and Laborious *Huetius*, in his laudable Work, the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, (Proposit. iv. cap. vii. sect. vi. pag. 83. *Paris*, 1679.) enumerates so many of such Religious Customs and Rites, as do truly render it, beyond all Doubt or Question ; that all those different Natives

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are descended of those who have inhabited in different Regions of our older known World. And consequently, whatever hath before been represented by us, in relation to the Conduct of God, with regard to the rest of Mankind, is equally applicable to the State of the *Americans*. If they have corrupted, stifled, abused, and lost, any degrees of Light formerly imparted to them; the Divine universal Goodness will find the way to supply their necessary Wants, as soon as they shall become of a proper Disposition to receive his Manifestations for their Profit. And we ought to conclude, that their wanting of them, hath only been, to prevent their greater Condemnation. And thus we are rid of all the difficulty that relateth specially to the *Americans*.

§. II. And now, with regard to all *Pagan Nations*, and People, whomsoever, I have only one Remark more to add: And it is of great Importance, *viz.* That in the common Wreck, and Degeneracy of the human Nature, incurred by the Fall of our First Parents, God hath not only reserved to us, that Light of weakened human Reason we enjoy; with the Capacity of discerning Truth, and Moral Equity, in many Degrees of great Use and Importance, by the due exercise of that Light, and the benefit of some self-evident Principles: But also hath afforded and preserved, in the whole Race of Mankind, a continual Tradition of a Deity; a Divine Providence; a Future State of Rewards and Punishments; together with a Natural Conscience, that doth unavoidably accuse and condemn, or approve and acquit, the self-conscious human Mind, in most of the great Branches of Moral Duty, according to the Things done in the Body, that are more eminently Good, or Evil.

Of those Rays of natural Light and Understanding, the share of weakned Reason yet remaining unto Mankind; with the Capacity of discerning Truth and Moral Equity, in many Degrees of great Use and Importance, through the benefit of some self-evident Principles: Of those, I say, there is little need of treating here. Vain Man is apt enough to have the Conviction of them; and even to imagine them capable of reaching higher, than they truly are; yea, even to judge of Matters which Angels cannot pry into. And the *Deists* themselves, have hitherto owned a *Natural Conscience*, that doth unavoidably accuse and condemn, as well as approve and acquit, the self-conscious human Mind, in most of the great Branches of Moral Duty, according to the Things done in the Body, that are more eminently Good, or Evil. And therefore, I need only here to treat of the Universal Tradition of the three things mentioned.

Now, if together with those natural Capacities, allowed and pleaded for, by the *Deists* themselves; it hath pleased God likewise, mercifully to afford and preserve, in the whole Race of Mankind, a continual *Tradition* of the other three Things mentioned, viz. Of a *Deity*; of a *Divine Providence*; and of a *Future State* of Rewards and Punishments: Here is a great Foundation for Mankind to build upon, for all Mankind. And when this Foundation is duly cultivated and improved; the kind and bountiful God and Father of Mankind, who thus far hath given liberally unto all; is further also, ready to impart that supernatural Light of Revelation, and the greater Measures of his Aid, which go along therewith, and is yet further necessary for attaining the Perfection of our Nature and Eternal Felicity. And withal, he hath a kind and merciful regard, even to the weak Endeavours of cultivating and improving that

that universal Tradition, and those natural Powers remaining in Mankind ; and is ready to cherish those Endeavours, by the assistance of a common and universal Grace, which *Jesus Christ* hath purchased ; *who is the Saviour of all Men*, (1 Tim. iv. 10.) *For the same Lord over all, is rich unto all, that call upon him*, (Rom. x. 12.) *A present help in time of Need, a helper of the helpless, and never forsaketh them that seek him*, (Psal. ix. 10.)

But if Men will neglect to improve the rich Talents which all enjoy ; like him in the Parable, who hid his Talent in the Earth : Have they not enough to answer for ? And, if instead of making due improvement, they shall basely and ungratefully abuse their Master's Goods that are bestowed ; have they any reason to complain, that more and richer Talents are not entrusted to them, which would but encrease their Guilt, and Condemnation ?

Now, this universal Tradition of the three Things mentioned, is so notorious and manifest, as cannot admit of any contradiction, it has been observed by antient *Pagan* Authors ; and is confirmed by all the modern Discoveries of an improved Navigation. A Tradition that is no less universal, than the human Shape ; throughout all the most barbarous People of the new found World, as well as the remotest Corners of our great Continent, and its Islands. It is impossible to account for this, upon any other footing, than that all Mankind are originally descended from the same common Stock. But neither could this have so universally preserved it, without the special provident Care of infinite Power and Wisdom. In the shortness to which the human Life hath been reduced, since before the Days of *Moses*, we are sensible that a few Generations destroys such Oral Tradition as is not recorded by Writing. But this Tradition is found universally where Letters

have never been known : And where the Corruption of Mankind is such, that they would wish it to be quite effaced. Every where a *Deity* is owned ; Religious Worship, of some kind or other, payed ; Prayers are offered, which implies the Conviction and Sense of a Providence ; and there is Hope and Fear of a Future State of Felicity, or Misery. And all this, altho', by what hath been represented in Chapter IV. it is sufficiently evident, that the illiterate are in no capacity of attaining the certain Knowledge of a *Deity*, by the Light of common Reason ; and that it doth neither afford to the learned, nor the illiterate, the absolute Evidence of a special Providence, or the Rewards of a Future Life. Which doth plainly indicate, not only that the wise and wonderful hand of God is in it ; but also, that it is derived originally from Divine Revelation. By this, the Divine Care keeps up in the Minds of Mankind, an universal and awful Restraint, which more or less, gives check to the extravagancies of Corruption and Immorality ; even where all other Sense of Revelation that hath before been imparted, is abandoned and extinguished. And from this handle it is, in the turns of Providence, that the infinitely good and wise God, doth kindly and gradually bring about corrupted People and Nations under Infidelity, into such proper Disposition, as may render them receptive of, and fitted for, benefit by the Gospel Revelation : Which he will never then be wanting to vouchsafe.

And now, upon the whole that hath been treated in this *Appendix*, and the *Chapter* that goes before it, it is sufficiently manifest, that the Conduct of God, with regard even to those People and Nations of the *Pagan* World, that may want the Light of the Gospel, is no ways inconsistent with the universal, impartial, Divine Benevolence to Mankind. And that,

that, even the distinguished and special Favour to the Jewish Nation, (unto whom were committed the Oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2.) is so far from being an Objection of any solid weight, against this universal Benevolence; that, on the contrary, it is truly a most pregnant Proof of it. All that special Favour being plainly designed by God, for the common, and universal Benefit of Mankind; to whom, the Redemption purchased by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World, doth universally extend, (Joh. iv. 42. and 1 Jo. ii. 2.)

The Author of Christianity as old, &c. not only demands a demonstrative Evidence that the Scriptures are of Divine Revelation; but also, often throughout his Book, requires such *Internal Marks* and *Criteria*, as may make this evident to the unlearned, without the necessity of such External and Moral Proofs, as they have neither Leisure nor Capacity to examine and judge of. The Second Part of this *Treatise*, doth relate to that Subject: And will be better understood by every sincere Christian, tho' unlearned, than by that Author, with all his *Logick*. Because, besides the *Light of Common Reason*, there is further necessary, to the through Understanding of it, another *Source* and *Principle* of Divine Light: According to a noted Saying of St. *Augustine*. *De fide et Symbol. Cap. 1. pag. 151. Tom. 6. Edit. Benedict.* *Scriptum est enim, nisi credideritis, non intelligetis.* i. e. Unless you are qualified by the Divine Grace of Faith, you cannot duly understand.

The End of the First Part.

CHAS. A. BROWN D. D.

1882
The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of the President of the American Association of University Professors for the year 1882-1883. The names are given in alphabetical order of the names of the institutions to which they are attached.

1. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
2. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
3. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
4. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
5. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan

6. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
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12. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
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14. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
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16. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
17. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
18. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
19. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan
20. Mr. J. H. Alden, University of Michigan

A
Rational Account
OF THE
Evidence of that Faith
By which the
SINCERE CHRISTIAN
Doth Believe the
Holy Scriptures,
And the Doctrine contained therein, to be the
WORD of GOD.

Being PART II. of the
Short View of the Evidences upon which
the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, and
the Divine Authority of the HOLY
SCRIPTURES, is established.

Auct. P. M. Eccl. Scot. Direptæ & Gementis, Presb.

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THE NEW YORK

EVIDENCE OF THE

EXERCISES

HOLY

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T O A L L
CHRISTIANS;

And more especially

To the most celebrated Body
professing the Reformed
Religion; the Clergy, and
Serious People of the
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THE following short Treatise is
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commended to their deliberate and
impartial Examination, by

PATRICK MIDDLETON.

THE HISTORY OF THE

TO A L E

CHRISTIAN

And more especially

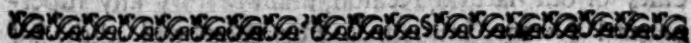
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PATRICK MIDDLETON



PART II.



A Rational Account of the Evidence of that Faith

By which the Sincere Christian doth believe the

HOLY SCRIPTURES

And the Doctrine contained therein to be the

WORD of GOD.

CHAP. I.

IN the foregoing Part of this Treatise I have given a short View of some of the most weighty moral Evidences upon which the Christian Religion and the divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures is established: Together

ther with a Defence both of the *Usefulness* and *Necessity* of Divine Revelation, against the Grand Argument of the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*. But we have to do, not only with Infidels, and the Enemies of Revealed Religion; but even among those who profess to believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God. There are abundance of such, who think there is no more necessary to all the purposes of Christianity, but the meer External Revelation, established only upon a *Moral* Evidence; together with the mere Capacity or Faculty of our natural Reason, unassisted by any supernatural Divine Influence: For they will allow of no other Divine Grace, but that of outward Divine Revelation, and the lucky Occurrences of common Divine Providence; without any inward Influence of God's Holy Spirit, acting in a supernatural way upon the Soul of Fall'n Man. It may give Grief to observe, that this *Pelagian* Heresy is spreading: And that too many, in the just Aversion they have against one most dangerous Extream, *viz.* The wildness of *Enthusiasm*; are running headlong into another Extream of no less danger, the *Pelagian* Heresy.

I hope, by the Divine Help, to convince those that impartially seek after Christian Truth, that the divine *Grace* of *Faith*, by which the Sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, doth truly afford a more convincing Evidence of that Great Truth, than can be attained by any *moral* Proof whatsoever; and at the same time to give a rational Account of that more convincing Evidence; so as to vindicate it from all the wildness of *Enthusiasm* on the one hand, and the weakness of an ill-grounded Credulity on the other. And thereby to render it manifest, that it is only Ignorance of the Divine Truth, that makes Infidels to imagine, there are not such *intrinsical* Evidences in the Holy Scrip-
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tures themselves, as are fully sufficient to afford the most rational Conviction of their Divine Authority, to the human Mind that is capable to receive it.

And being now chiefly to Reason with those who profess their Belief, that the Scriptures are of Divine Revelation, upon the Evidence of the Moral Proof, (tho' sometimes the Controversy with Infidelity may incidentally occur.) I shall therefore chiefly build my Reasoning upon the Scriptures themselves, as a common Principle agreed in, with those whom I chiefly endeavour to convince, which I could not do in the First Part of this Treatise, where the Dispute was only against Infidelity. And withal, in the sense of my own Insufficiency to manage this Province, with that accuracy which the Subject doth merit; I shall therefore treat of it with all the brevity I can; hoping that those Hints which I may briefly suggest, shall excite more skilful Hands to illustrate and improve them, for promoting more effectually, the Advantage of Religion, and the common Benefit of Christians.

Now, altho' the Evidence of that Moral Proof of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which the *Breviate* in the First Chapter of the foregoing Part doth afford; if it is duly pondered, and the Facts from which it is drawn, deliberately examined, is such, that the Force of it, in conjunction with the Excellency of the Doctrine of Christianity, is truly sufficient for the Conviction of an Infidel. Yet, after all,

It is obvious, that the whole Chain of Reasoning, and all the Arguments complicated and engrossed therein, are all framed and drawn by mere Natural Reason, as it is only assisted by the Light of Human Authority, and Historical Tradition. And therefore, However strong and pregnant they are, espe-

especially when accompanied with the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine; yet after one shall duly weigh the united Force of all, it must be allowed, that all the Conclusion they can operate, for the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, can never go beyond the Force of the Premises, which are chiefly built on Human Authority and Tradition. And therefore, they amount only to the establishing of an *Human Faith*. Tho' this is truly, with greater Evidence, than any other ancient Facts can pretend to.

§. II. But the Divine *Grace* of *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, as it is in all sincere Christians; doth certainly afford an Evidence and Conviction, that is far beyond all that can be drawn by mere Natural Reason, from all External and Moral Arguments. Indeed, the Conviction which even those, when duly weighed, are able to work, is enough to render Unbelievers inexcusable. But yet, without the Accession of a Supernatural and Divine Influence upon the human Mind, they can never operate the Divine *Grace* of *Faith*.

The Author to the *Hebrews*, tells us, *Chap. xi.* That *Faith is the Evidence of things not seen*. Indeed it is an Evidence of the strongest Conviction: As is manifest by the astonishing Effects it hath produced. But still, the Evidence is, *Of things not seen* by the bodily Eye, nor to be discerned by the weak Reason of fallen Man, unassisted by the Light, and convincing Influence of the Holy Spirit.

In fallen Man, the Understanding is darkened, as well as the Will perverse, and estranged from God: *Being alienated from the Life of God, by the Ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their Heart,* Eph. iv. 18. And therefore the human Mind must be enlightened, and influenced by the Holy Spirit,

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before it can receive that Conviction which the Evidence of *Faith* doth afford.

If all the Truths and sublime Mysteries of our Holy Religion, and that special Article thereof, *The Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, were to be clearly seen, or wholly and plainly drawn, from such Axioms, and self-evident Principles, as a Mathematical Proposition is demonstrated, *i. e.* So as the most perverse Reluctancy of Mind could not resist the Evidence: Then, where were the Praise, and the Virtue, and the Reward of *Faith*?

Every *Science* that is to be acquired by the *meer* natural Power and use of humane Reason, is either founded upon the Conclusions of some other Science, or established upon some self-evident Principle, or Principles, that are known to be certain, by their own Light. And it is properly this that denominates them *Sciences*; because they are evidently drawn from such Principles, and do proceed with such strength of Demonstration, as forceth Reason to yield to them.

But it is far otherwise with that Conviction and Certainty that is built upon Divine Revelation: For of the Principles from which it is drawn, we have just as much Light, and no more, as it hath pleased God to Reveal: And they rest either chiefly, or entirely, upon the authority of God Revealing them. If they were manifest to our natural Reason, in the same manner as the Principles of humane *Sciences* are, then all would be *Knowledge*, or *Vision*, I mean, Rational Sight, *i. e.* evident to the Rational Mind, in its own natural Strength and Capacity; and so there would be no place for *Faith*. And altho' the supernatural Truths which Revelation teacheth, do not appear so manifest, as those of *Science*, to unassisted natural Reason, yet they are in themselves most sure and infallible; because they proceed immediately
from,

from God, the heavenly and infinite Wisdom, *Psal. xciv. He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?* The Light of natural Reason may be imposed on, and thereby deceive; especially when it is applied to, or exercised about supernatural Things: But that Infinite Light from which Divine Revelation doth proceed, can neither deceive, nor be deceived. And therefore we yield as firm an Assent to the Truths of Divine Revelation, as we can do to the most evident Principles of Natural Reason; or any the most natural and evident Deductions therefrom. And this assent is called *Faith*.

It is in this manner that Archbishop *Laud* doth reason against the *Jesuit, Fisher*. Pages 68, 69, 70. 3d. Edit. And indeed, if *Faith* had those Grounds of Self-evidence in human Reason to rest upon, it would lose its Nature, and have no Title to its Praise, and its Reward.

And as that incomparable Author doth further observe, It is the good Pleasure of God, to bring Men, fallen Men, to Salvation, and Eternal Happiness, by *Faith*, and not by *Knowledge*, or *Science*: That so the weakest, and most simple in Understanding, may have their Way open to it. And certainly, many of weak Understanding, do attain it by *Faith*; while many of Learning, and great Knowledge, do lose their Way to it; because they will believe no more than they clearly know, by the Principles of Self-evidence, or Inferences clearly drawn from such Principles. Therefore God leaves them in their Pride, and exalted Vanity of Mind: According to the Words of our Saviour, (*Matt. xi. 25.*) *He hides those things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto Babes. He resists the proud, but gives the Light of his Grace to the humble; and the meek will he teach his Way.*

The Way of Knowledge, drawn by mere Natural Reason, from Principles of Self-evidence, was not that which God hath judged fittest for bringing Man to Eternal Salvation. As Man sinned and fell by Pride, Eating of *the forbidden tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*: So, therefore God thought meet to humble him; by obliging him to subject all his Natural Knowledge, and Understanding, to the Authority of Divine Revelation; which is as great an Instance of Self-denial, as any other: And to require of him, either to submit to Faith, or risk his own Salvation, and Eternal Happiness. And withal, of himself, and by his own mere Natural Powers, in this State of sinful, weakened, and corrupted Nature, Man is not capable of this Part of Self-denial, and the due Submission of *Faith*, without the merciful Influence of the *Divine Grace*, both enlightening the Understanding, and subduing, drawing, and inclining, the corrupted, estranged, and perverse Will.

§. III. Natural Reason therefore, and the Evidence which it doth afford, is certainly different from *Divine Grace*, and the *Faith* which that doth work. All Christians, who truly believe, and impartially consider the Holy Scriptures, must undoubtedly be convinced of this.

For there is nothing more plainly taught, and inculcated in the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old, and New Testaments, than this great Truth: That the Divine Influence of Gods Holy Spirit, upon the weak Mind of fallen Man, is necessary, both to enlighten the Understanding, and to draw and incline the Will: And that without this, we can neither duly understand, nor receive and embrace, his Heavenly Revelation, and Divine Word.

The contradicting of this great Truth, was the very formal Herefy of *Pelagius*, and his Followers; as the Learned *Hugo Grotius*, hath at great length demonstrated, in his *Disquisitio de Dogmatibus Pelagianis*. Their other Errors, concerning *Original Sin*, &c. were but so many Branches, arising from this great Root.

Now, that *Hereticks*, and the Enemies of Divine Revelation, should call in Question this great Truth, of the *Necessity of the Divine Grace*, both to enlighten the Understanding, and to incline the Will; internally operating upon the weakened and estranged human Mind, is not to be at all admired. But it is astonishing, to find Learned Men, hesitating to own this Truth, who are Members of a Christian Church, that makes solemn Profession of believing this *Necessity*. Is it possible, that such do really think there is no more *necessary* to all the Purposes of Christianity, but the external Revelation established only upon a *moral* Evidence, and the mere Capacity, or Faculty, of our natural Reason, unassisted by the Divine Influence? For then, How is it possible for them to make Sense of their own daily Prayers unto God, both for his enlightning and assisting Grace, in the many beautiful Forms, and devout Collects of the *English* Liturgy?

It may be proper here to set down some of those Texts, both of the Old and the New Testaments, that have been urged by the antient Christian Authors, against the *Pelagians*.

In the Old Testament the Holy Psalmist crieth unto God, *Psal. cxix. Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things out of thy Law. Give me Understanding that I may know thy Testimonies, that I may learn thy Commandments. And teach me thy Statutes.* And in *Psal. xxxvi. 9. In thy Light shall we see Light.* And in *Psal. xxv. 4, 5. Shew me thy ways,*

ways, O Lord, teach me thy Paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my Salvation. He had access to all the Records of Divine Revelation, that were then extant. He had the Assistance of the Priesthood, and there were also Prophets then living. And he had as good Faculties as other Men. And yet these, and many such like Expressions, do plainly shew, he was sensible, that he needed further, the Aid of a Divine Influence to enlighten his Mind. And hence also, are those Words of Solomon, his wise Son, (*Prov. ii.*) *If thou criest after Knowledge, (viz. unto God by Prayer) and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding; — then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God: For the Lord giveth Wisdom.* And *Job xxxiv. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me.* And *Job xxxvi. 10. He openeth also the Ear to Discipline.*

In the New Testament, St. Paul prayeth for the Ephesians, *That the Eyes of their Understanding might be enlightened: and that God would grant them according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might, by his Spirit, in the inner Man, that Christ might dwell in their Hearts by faith.* And for the Colossians, he prayeth, *That they might be filled with the Knowledge of the Divine Will, in all Wisdom, and spiritual Understanding, (See Luke ult. 45.) and encreasing in the Knowledge of God.* And hence it is, that the same Apostle says, *Faith is the Gift of God,* Ephes. ii. 8. And again, in Rom. xii. *According as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith.* Hence also it was, that the Disciples did pray to Christ, *Lord encrease our Faith.* Yea, our Lord himself, prayed for St. Peter, *That his Faith might not fail.* And the Father of the possessed Son, did cry, *Lord I believe, help thou my Unbelief.* And in Ephes. i. 29. St. Paul saith, *Unto you it is given, not only to*

believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake. The Prophet *Isaiah* had foretold concerning the Christian Church, in these Words, *And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord,* Isa. liv. 13. And with reference to this, our Saviour himself, saith, St. *Joh.* vi. 44, 45. Veries, *No Man cometh unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him. — It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.* And again, in ver. 65. of that same Chapter, *Therefore said I unto you, that No Man can come unto me, except it were given unto him, of my Father.* And the Words of St. *James* are very plain, *Jam.* i. 5. *If any Man lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, &c.*

§. IV. From these, and many other Texts, it is evident, that in fallen Man, the Eyes of the Understanding must be enlightened by God's Holy Spirit; and the corrupt Will, drawn and enclined, by the Influence of his Grace, who *Opened the Heart of Lydia,* Acts xvi. That, besides the External Revelation, he must be inwardly *taught of God, and drawn by the Father.* That *Faith*, and the Increase of it, is the *Gift of God.* That, besides all other Endeavours, in the Use of our Natural Powers and Faculties; Prayers are to be offered up to the *Father of Lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect Gift;* both for this Gift, and the Increase of it.

Yea further, in *Rom.* viii. 7. the Apostle teacheth, that *the Carnal Mind, is at enmity with God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed, can be.* There is therefore, another Principle, viz. Of *Divine Grace*, necessary to the subduing of this rebellious Mind, and the *casting down Imaginations, (or Reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God; and bringing into Captivity, every thought to the Obedience of Christ,* 2 Cor. x. 5.

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The natural Man, saith St. Paul, in 1 Cor. ii. 14. receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned. For in our sinful state of Nature, corrupted by the Fall of Man, the Understanding is darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, Ephes. iv. 18. Therefore the Eyes of the Understanding must be opened, the Faculty of Reason influenced, the humane Mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit, before it can discern the things of the Spirit of God; and the Will also moved and influenced, before it can receive that Conviction which the evidence of *Faith* doth afford.

From what is already suggested in this Chapter, it is sufficiently evident, *First*, That all the Conviction of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which is drawn by *mere* natural Reason, from Facts attested by humane Authority and Tradition (tho' of the most undoubted *moral* Evidence) can only amount to the establishing of an humane *Faith*.

And, *Secondly*, That the Divine Influence of God's Holy Spirit, upon the weak and corrupted Mind of Fallen Man, is necessary both to enlighten the Understanding, and to draw and incline the Will: And that without this, we can neither duly Understand, nor receive or embrace the heavenly Revelation of God's Holy Word, by the *Grace* of *Faith*. And doubtless, it will be owned by all Christians who believe there is a supernatural Principle of Divine *Grace*, communicated and imparted to the Faithful; That *mere* natural Reason, and the Evidence which it doth afford, either by *moral* Proof, or otherways, is different from Divine *Grace*, and any Evidence whatsoever, which it can, or may work. And therefore I now proceed

To account for that Divine Grace of Faith, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God. And

§. V. *First*, By the merciful Influence of that Holy Spirit, which is imparted to all sincere Christians, according to our Saviour's Promise; even the *moral* Proofs that are drawn from Facts, for the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, are rendred more clear and pregnant to our natural Reason, *viz.* By taking off those Prejudices, and that Aversion against them, which are become natural to sinful Man. By placing them in their truly native rational Light: And both prompting and enabling to ponder them duly; and to the due and deliberate Consideration of our great Interest and Concernment in those Things that relate to the Revelation of the Divine Will; and of the unexpressible Importance of them. And by the silent, kind, seasonable, frequent, and importunate Suggestions that are made to our Minds, and do operate, both upon the Understanding and the Will, in the vast variety of Providences that do occur.

But, *Secondly*, Besides such extrinsical Arguments, drawn from *Facts*, as have been formerly represented, Part I. Chap. I. There are also in the Holy Scriptures themselves, intrinsical *Κριτήρια*, (as the Schools call them,) *i. e.* Intrinsical Characters and Marks, by which they carry in themselves, their own Evidence. I need not here mention the Miracles, nor the Completion of Prophecies recorded in the Scriptures; because truly, until the Scriptures themselves are believed to be of Divine Inspiration, these are only such *Facts*, as do concur with the other *Facts* that have many of them been mentioned, to the affording and establishing of the *moral* Evidence. And therefore, they cannot any sooner carry the Con-
viction,

viction, that the Scriptures are of Divine Authority, the least degree further than that *moral* Evidence which is afforded in their said Concurrence.

But besides these, and the like Topicks of *moral* Proof which they contain; There is also in the Scriptures themselves, a sublimeness of Doctrine; such awakening Motives; such Representation of Almighty God, in his Holy Attributes, and his dealings with Men, for promoting their Eternal Happiness; such exact, transcendant, and beautiful Rules of Life, with respect both to the outward, and inward Man, with respect to Almighty God, our Neighbours, and our selves; as is not to be found in any other Writings, or Systems of human Composure: And withal, in such simplicity, and so stript of all the Arts of human Subtilty, and yet such awful Majesty and Authority, without the enticing Words of the Wisdom of this World; as when all is considered, and this Holy Word duly read, or heard, and meditated upon; is exceedingly becoming the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God. The Harmony also of the Holy Scriptures, though delivered by various Persons, as the Organs, and at great distances of Time, during the space of about two thousand Years; all beautifully conspiring to the same great End, worthy of God, and for the good of Man, and his Eternal Happiness. And this is, in concurrence with all the other intrinsical *Keimera*, a pregnant Evidence of their Divine Authority. And there is no *Individual* can tell how many more there are, than these which I have named: Because they may shine into, and be discerned by, different faithful Souls, in a numberless Variety; accordingly as doth best suit to the different Capacities of various *Individuals*.

Now the Conviction of *Faith*, is drawn from these which I have named, or other intrinsical Indications and Marks, as they are all respectively displayed

and carried home upon the Mind, by the Light and Influence of the Divine *Grace*.

And then further, together with all these, there is in the Holy Scriptures, a certain unexpressible Energy and Force; for convincing, exhorting, comforting, humbling, and yet encouraging, the Christian Soul: Operating upon it, with efficacy and success, in its numberless variety of Circumstances.

And altho', in this corrupt State of Sin and Mifery, the weakened Reason of fallen Man doth not, and cannot, of it self, sufficiently discern all, or perhaps any of those *Kermeia*, or intrinsical Evidences, according to St. Paul, who as is before mentioned, doth teach, in 1 Cor. ii. 14. That *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. Yet, when the Faculty of Reason is enlightened, and the Eyes of the Understanding are opened, by the Holy Spirit; they then display themselves to the Mind of a sincere Christian, with a satisfying and beautiful Conviction. As is implied in the Words of the Apostle, which do immediately follow those last cited, *viz. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things. Or as the Original literally beareth, discerneth all things*.

§. VI. It is this Holy Spirit, promised by our Saviour, and imparted to all sincere Christians, which not only renders us capable to discern those *Intrinsical Evidences*, by removing our Prejudices, and affording the supernatural Light that is necessary to the discerning of them; but doth also give the Reading, Hearing, and Meditating upon the Holy Scriptures an *energy* upon our Minds; and worketh in us, an *experimental Feeling* of their Power and Efficacy upon our Hearts and Lives: And the *repeated Experience* of this Power and Efficacy of God's
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Holy Word, doth still, more and more, encrease and strengthen the Conviction and Evidence, that it is indeed the Infinite and Merciful God Himself, who speaketh in the Scriptures.

By the operation of this Holy Spirit, the rational Faculty, which in Fall'n Man is sadly weakened and darkened, is enlightened; and the eyes of the Understanding opened, to see and perceive the Beauties of God's Law, his Word and Doctrine; which the Natural Man without this doth not perceive.

By the operation of this Holy Spirit, the corrupted Will, which in Fall'n Man is naturally estranged, and opposite to God and all Holy Things; is also sanctified, renewed, kindly drawn and inclined to receive the Divine Revelation, and to embrace the Doctrine and Truths contained in God's Word, and the Precepts and Promises which He doth therein give; together with the Conditions of them, that are required on our Part.

And then farther, There is an Effect that doth flow from all this merciful Influence and Operation of the Holy Spirit, which doth never fail upon the corresponding, or compliance of the humane Will, duly to embrace and cultivate this merciful Divine Influence, *viz. The solacing Comfort* of all this, together with the *Experience*, and the repeated *Experience* and *Feeling* of the *Power* and *Efficacy* of God's Word, upon the Heart and Life; creates in the humane Soul such certainty and clearness of Conviction, that it is God's Holy Word; and such Delight in it, as is far beyond all that can be the effect of any unenlightened rational Evidence, even in the intuitive Knowledge of Self-evidence: It is an Evidence which the Soul doth feel with a joyful Acquiescence and unparalleled Conviction.

And thus I have briefly given a *plain and rational Account* of this great Article, *viz. The Faith by which*

we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God
And as it is perfectly agreeable to right Reason, so it is equally guarded against the danger, both of Enthusiasm and Credulity. And withal, None can have any shadow of just Exception against it, who do believe, and allow of, the ordinary Influences and *Grace* of the Holy Spirit, upon sincere and faithful Souls; and who believe that these are *necessary* to Christians: But the experience I have of the Mistakes that may arise in the Minds of well-meaning candid Persons; and from the opposition which this account of the Faith, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, hath received; upon the perusal of a short abstract of it, imparted with design to allay and prevent the Effects of some warm Debates that had been raised, which it is not needful here to mention. This Experience and Opposition have made me sensible, that it is necessary for me, yet farther to explain and establish this Account I have given; hoping, by the Divine Assistance, to vindicate it from all suspicion of Enthusiasm on one hand, or Credulity on the other; and to convince all who are not wilfully Obstinate, that this Account which I have given, is indeed the genuine Truth.

§. VII. The Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures is a Subject that hath been copiously treated of, by many Learned Men, especially since the Times of the Reformation. The Writers of the Romish Communion, tho' they do indeed, concur (for the conviction of Infidels) to urge, as well as the Reformed do, the Proofs of Moral Evidence that are drawn from Facts and Tradition, together with the Excellency and Purity of the Doctrine: Yet they do unanimously teach, That the Faith by which Christians do believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, doth ultimately rely upon the pretended *Infallible Authority* of

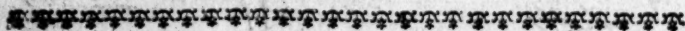
of their Chnrch. I am not here to descend into that Question of the pretended *Infallibility* of their Church; Nor to examine how they wrestle to extricate themselves from that blundering circle, of proving their *Infallibility* by Scripture: And yet establishing the Authority of Scripture upon that same *Infallibility* of their Church. The Advantage which the Reformed have over them, upon those Heads, can scarcely fail to be obvious to every impartial Mind.

I only here remark, that when the Reformed do affirm, that the Holy Scriptures *prove themselves to be the Word of God*, it is a very senseless and trifling Demand of the *Romish* Writers, by which they require them to produce some one Text of Scripture, giving testimony to all the rest. For it is no ways necessary to the working of that *Faith* in us, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, that any part of Scripture, should give testimony to all the rest of it. And altho' there were such a Text to be vouched, yet that Text again, would at this rate, need another Testimony; and so on, without End. But by what hath been represented, there is no need of such manner of testimony; for it is in a quite different way that the Scriptures prove themselves to be the Word of God, *viz.* Their own *intrinsical Evidences*, by the Influence of the Divine Grace, displaying them to the Understanding, and reconciling the Will to receive them, do carry home this Conviction upon the Heart. And the repeated *Experience* of the Power and Efficacy of God's Word in the Holy Scriptures, doth crown and strengthen this Conviction.

This then, is the Sum of all.

The Light and Influence of the Divine Grace, displays and carries home, upon the human Mind, the full Weight and Strength of the *intrinsical Evidences*: And all is crown'd and establish'd, by the
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sensible, or *conscious Experience*, of the Power and Efficacy of the Holy Scriptures, upon the Heart and Life. And the *repeated Experience* of this, their Power and Efficacy, (by the continued Influence of the same Divine *Grace*, still co-operating) doth encrease, strengthen, and perfect this Conviction of *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God.



CHAP. II.

That this Subject hath not been treated of by the reformed Writers, with that Clearness that is requisite.

§. I. **T**HE Account of that Divine *Grace* of *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, which is briefly given in the foregoing Chapter, may help to the explaining some Passages of the antient Christian Authors. But it is more especially useful, for assisting to understand duly the right Meaning of the Reformed Divines upon this Subject, *viz.* When they mention the *inward Testimony* of the *Holy Spirit*, as *necessary* to the due Conviction of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures. And when they say, that it is the *Spirit* of God speaking in the Holy Scriptures, that gives the *Conviction* that they are his *Word*. Or when they affirm, that the Holy Scriptures prove themselves to be God's *Holy Word*. Only it is to be wished, that they had treated of this important Subject, more distinctly, and

and in a manner more plain and intelligible, as well as in Expressions more cautiously guarded. This might have prevented much opposition and wrangling, as well as the giving a seeming Handle and Encouragement to the *Wildness* of *Enthusiasm*, under a pretended *private Spirit*.

For it must be confessed, that the Writers of the *Reformation*, have not hitherto treated of this Subject, with the Plainness that is needful, and far less with the Accuracy that is to be desired. Yea, the publick and authorized *Confessions*, are in this respect defective: Insomuch, that not only the Multitude is left in obscurity; but the diligent Student of Divinity may sweat and labour, with their voluminous Books among his Hands, treating largely of the Subject, and find himself bewildered, not knowing distinctly how to satisfy his own Mind, from the Account they give of the *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth *believe* the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*. The Experience of this in my younger Years, makes me desirous to contribute all the help I can in this compendious Summary.

For *First*, Altho' the *Necessity* of the Divine *Grace*, and the Influences of the Holy *Spirit*, both to enlighten the weak Understanding, and to sanctify, draw, and incline, the corrupted Will of fallen Man, is plainly and most expressly the Doctrine of the Church of *England*; to which, many excellent Prayers and Collects of her Liturgy, are directly suited: Yet the Learned and Bright *English* Divines, after they have insisted upon the *moral Evidence* that is drawn from *Facts* and *Tradition*, together with the Excellency of the Doctrine, by which the Mouth of Infidelity may be stopped: They rest here: As if it were not needful to proceed to any account of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*,
with

with a *Conviction* that is far beyond all that can be the Effect of such *moral Evidence*.

'Tis indeed true, that if they have only in their View, the convincing of Infidels : To speak to them of the *Divine Grace*, and its Influences upon the human Mind, is not the way to convince them ; until they have first pondered and examined the *moral Proof*. For, notwithstanding the wisest Heathens have owned that the Deity may, and doth, in a supernatural Way, influence the human Mind : Yet to plead the *Experience* of this by holy Christian Souls, can have no further weight with the Adversaries of revealed Religion, than so far as they give Credit to the Testimony of those who do avouch their *Experience* of it. Altho' even this may be a strong Motive to induce a candid and ingenious Infidel, to a more strict and impartial Enquiry.

But it is not easy to imagine, what should hinder the Pious and Learned Divines, whose Office it is, to instruct the weak and ignorant, from giving a plain and rational Account of that Christian *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God* ? Or what it is that doth divert them from treating in a plain, and familiar Way, of the kind and merciful Part, acted therein by God's Holy Spirit ; which is a Subject, not only edifying, but likewise full of solacing Comfort to all devout and sincere Souls. Perhaps this is occasioned by a needless Fear, lest the carrying this Matter any further than what is the result and deduction of our natural and weak Reason, in the mere Use of *moral Proof*, might give some Advantage to the pretended *private Spirit* of the wild *Enthusiast* : And that therefore they make no mention of the *necessary Influence* of the Holy Spirit, to the attaining of this truly Christian Conviction. But would it not rather tend to the guarding from all the enthusiastick Folly, and

unintelligible Notions of several Sectaries, to explain this important Subject in a clear and rational Way?

Again, on the other hand, the Writers of the *Calvinist* Perswasion, do generally treat of this Matter, with Expressions that are very unguarded; and in a manner that doth rather embarrass, than satisfy the Mind of a serious Enquirer. Nor do they duly explain, what they mean by the *Inward Testimony* of the *Holy Spirit*, given to this great Truth, that *the Scriptures are God's Word*, in the Heart of the Believer.

The Learned Dr. *Baron*, in his celebrated Disputation, *De Objecto Formali Fidei*, doth point a little to what is needed in this Question: But the Scholastic Form and Terms unto which he hath tied himself, doth hinder the Perspicuity that was otherwise natural to that famous Author. *Le Blanc* indeed, in his *Theses Theol. De Autoritate Sacrae Scripturae*, brings this Matter, with his usual Distinctness, to the chief Point of our present Enquiry, viz. Of the *Conviction of the sincere Christian*, that the Scriptures are the *Word of God*, which he allows to be beyond all that can be the effect of any *moral* Evidence, that can be drawn by mere Natural Reason, from *Facts* and *Tradition*, or any other Topics. But when he comes to account for this, tho' he had before mentioned the Influence of the Holy Spirit, yet then he turns it upon what he calls *Certitudo Adherentiae*, the Certainty of Adherence; by a piece of Jargon, confounding the Cause with the Effect, i. e. the Certainty and Conviction, with the Adherence which is the Consequent thereof. Nor have the Learned Divines of *Geneva*, that have lately flourished, done more to clear this Matter.

Neither will the Student of Divinity find it more easy to attain any clear and distinct Instruction from the Learned Writers of the *Lutherian* Perswasion, on this

this Subject ; who, so far as I am able to observe, are no less defective in their accounting for that *Faith* by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*, than the *Calvinists* are : Insomuch that there is need of some such account of this Matter, as I have endeavoured briefly to point unto, and to explain it, in my weak Capacity, in the three last *Sections* of the foregoing *Chapter*. And if by the short Hints therein suggested, any learned and more skilful Hand shall be induced to take occasion of Enlarging and Illustrating, or supplying the Defects of what I have offered, to the better Edifying, and greater Satisfaction of those who need Instruction ; it will be a laudable and charitable Office. And truly, the Importance of the Subject doth merit this. The Incomparable Archbishop *Laud* hath indeed done more, and with greater Accuracy, to set this Subject into a due Light, than all the Reformed besides. Yet still, after him, there hath been need of much fuller Illustration, which three Learned and Famous Authors had too great opportunity of performing, to have let it slip *, when it seems to have fallen naturally in their way : But in overlooking this they have not been singular.

And now, because in the foregoing Chapter, *viz.* in the three last Sections thereof, I sundry times mentioned that *Energy* and *Power*, by which the Holy Scriptures do operate upon the Heart and Life of the sincere Christian ; together with the *Comfortable Experience* thereof, as that which crowns, and doth more and more encrease and strengthen the Assurance and Conviction, that they are the *Word of God* ; I shall therefore here point to some of those Texts by

* *Viz.* Archbishop Tillotson, his Rule of Faith. Bishop Stillingfleet, his Rational Account, &c. Dr. Samuel Clark, in his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.

which the Spirit of God himself, doth plainly teach this. viz.

§. II. First in the Old Testament. It was by the Power of God's Word, the Word of the eternal $\Lambda\omicron\gamma\Theta$, that the World was made. *And He sent his Word and healed them*, says the Psalmist, cvii. 20. *Psa. xix. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul. The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. Sweeter also than Honey and the Honeycomb. Psal. xxix. The Voice of the Lord is powerful, the Voice of the Lord is full of Majesty. Psal. cxix. 50. I will never forget thy Precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me. And Ver. 103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste? yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. And ver. 130. The entrance of thy Word giveth Light; it giveth understanding to the Simple. Isai. lv. 11, 12. For as the Rain cometh down, and the Snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither again, but watereth the Earth, and maketh it bring forth, and Bud, that it may give Seed to the Sower, and Bread to the Eater. So shall my Word be, that goeth out of my Mouth: it shall not return unto me void: but it shall accomplish that which I please; and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. And Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. The Prophet that hath a Dream, let him tell his Dream: And he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully. What is the Chaff to the Wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my Word like as a Fire? saith the Lord. And as a Hammer that breaketh the Rock in pieces?*

Secondly in the New Testament; St. Luke iv. 32. *They were astonished at his Doctrine, for his Word was with Power. St. John vi. 63. The Words that I speak, unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life. Acts xxvi. 18. St. Paul saith, He was sent with the Word of the Gospel to the Gentiles, to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness unto Light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And Rom. i. 16. For I am not a-*

shamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation. 1 Thess. i. 5. For our Gospel came not to you, in word only, but also in Power. And Ch. ii. of that same Epistle, ver. 13. For this cause also, thank we God, without ceasing; because when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men; but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe. Hebr. iv. 12. For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged Sword, even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit; and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a discernor of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. And St. Jam. i. 21. And receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls. And 1 Pet. ii. 2. As new born Babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.

Now these which I have collected, among many other Texts, do plainly prove the Truth I have affirmed, viz. the Power and Energy of God's Holy Word. And for obviating of all Exception, I think it proper here to subjoin, in manner following, viz. That the Word of God is still the same; and therefore, hath still the same Energy upon the well disposed Mind; whether it is delivered from the Mouth of the inspired Organ, or committed to Writing; and thereafter read, or heard. And to evince this, let what St. Paul saith, (2 Cor. x. 10, 11.) be well observed and weighed. For his Letters, say they, are weighty and powerfull; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. Let such an one think this: that such as we are in word, by Letters, when absent: such will we be also, in Deed, when we are present.

§ III. There is a Question, which the serious Minds that are less learned, or less experienced, will very naturally incline to move, and wish to have it satisf-

fatisfied. And before I close this *Section*, I shall here propose, and answer it, *viz.*

If one is persuaded of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, merely by the Force of those Arguments that are drawn from the *moral* Grounds of Evidence, by the Light of natural Reason: What is incumbent upon this Person, so stated, in order to attain the Conviction of *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe these Truths?

To this I answer in a few plain Directions.

First, The Person so stated, being already in Covenant with God by *Baptism*, is to make a new and solemn Surrender of himself unto God, in the *Terms* of the *Covenant of Grace*; with sincere purpose of Heart, to conform himself carefully unto those *Terms*, in the after conduct of his Life, by the Aids of the *Divine Grace*: Resigning all the Powers and Faculties of Soul and Body unto God; in, and through, *Jesus Christ* the Mediator between God and Man: And humbly depending on the Fidelity of God, for the faithful Performance of his Promises in the Gospel.

Secondly, Seeing our Blessed Saviour doth assure us, *That our heavenly Father, will give the Holy Spirit, to them that ask him*: And mercifully useth a familiar Argument to convince us of it, *St. Luk. xi. from ver. 9. to ver. 14.* The Person so stated, is therefore to use frequent, humble, fervent, and importunate Prayer to God, for this *Holy Spirit*: both to enlighten the Understanding, and to influence the Will: So as the Soul may feel by *Experience*, the *Power* and *Efficacy* of God's Word, both upon the Heart and Life; subduing the Reluctancies of corrupt Nature, renewing the Mind, *casting down Imaginations*, (Reasonings) *and every thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God*; and bringing into Captivity,

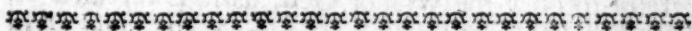
every Thought, to the obedience of Christ: 2 Cor. x. 5.

Thirdly, The Person so stated, is to be strictly careful to obey the Will of God, as it is revealed in his Holy Word; *Psal. cxii. 4. Unto the Upright there ariseth Light in Darknes.* And *St. John vii. 17. If any man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.* They are the Words of our Saviour. And again, in *St. John xiv. 21. He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self to him.* And again, *ver. 25th. If a Man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him, viz. by the Holy Spirit.* It is only this careful Obedience that can entitle to the special Favour of God.

These Directions are so plain, and so adapted to the Rules and Genius of our Holy Religion, that it is needless to use any Words, either to illustrate, or establish them. And if the Person, as stated in the Question, shall carefully follow these few Directions; in the frequent, diligent, attentive reading, hearing, and meditating upon, the Holy Scriptures; he cannot fail to attain the *Conviction of Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth embrace, and cleave unto them, with a comfortable *Assurance*, that they truly are the Word of God. And the comfortable *Experience*, and repeated *Experience*, and feeling of the *Power* and *Efficacy* of this Divine Word, upon the Heart and Life, by the Divine Grace still co-operating, will encrease, and strengthen, and perfect this *Conviction*. And it is in this sense, that we are to understand the Words of our Saviour, *St. Joh. x. 4, 5. viz. that he goeth before his Sheep, i. e. by the holy Example, he hath given; and the Sheep follow him; (to find their Pasture) for they know his Voice.* And

a Stran-

a Stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the Voice of Strangers.



C H A P. III.

In which, the Doctrine of the Reformed, upon the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, as it is explained and accounted for, in the first Chapter; is further cleared: And the most weighty Objections against it, removed.

§. I. **E**VERY Reader that hath dipped into the Controversies of Religion, cannot fail to have observed, how the Question hath been stated, betwixt the *Reformed*, and the *Romish* Church, with respect to the *Divine Authority* of the Holy Scriptures. How both of them do agree that the Scriptures are the Word of God. And that the belief of this, is considered by both, as a necessary Article of the *Christian Faith*. And it is obvious, that the *Reformed*, at least, have considered this, as a *prime* Article, a *prime* Principle of *Faith*, and *Fundamental*. Because all the Articles of their *Creed*, are built upon it. It being to them, the Foundation of the *Creed* it self.

And there can be nothing more evident than this, *viz.* That both the *Reformed*, and those of the *Romish* Church, are equally convinced, that the belief of this great Article, must be founded, and established, and built, upon some *solid Bottom*: And that this *solid Bottom* can be nothing less, than the *Authority* of God himself. This is evident, in Fact,

to all that have, with any degree of Application, considered their Doctrine of both sides.

Now it is a strong Presumption, that this hath been well examined; and that it is, the *well sifted Truth*; when both those sides, so sanguinely opposite to each other, do so harmoniously agree in it. And indeed, the Reasons that have determined both those sides, to agree so exactly in it, have such convincing Force, as cannot be resisted.

§. II. For, as the human Mind cannot rest, with any certainty of Conviction, especially in a matter of the highest Importance, unless it have some solid Bottom and Foundation to build upon: So there are only three ways possible, by which it can find any such *solid Bottom* and Foundation to rest it self upon, with regard to its *Conviction that the Scriptures are the Word of God*, viz. The Evidence of *Science*; the *Moral* Evidence; and the Evidence of *Faith*.

Now, *First*, That the Conviction by which the human Mind is ascertained, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, doth not rest upon the Evidence of *Science*, (human) * which is still derived, either from self-evident Principles, or the Conclusions of some higher *Science*; is plain, from what hath been represented in Chapter I. of this 2d. Part, Section II. And it is not needful to insist more for laying aside this, in the Question under View; because there are none that do affirm it.

And next, *Secondly*, As to the *Moral* Evidence of this Truth, that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God: Altho' this hath upon good Ground, been pleaded by all Christians; and is indeed, in it self, sufficient for the Conviction of an Infidel; Yet this

* The Parenthesis is adjected; because some of the eldest School-men, do found this, upon the Science Divine.

Moral Evidence, being chiefly drawn from *Facts*: Therefore so far as those *Facts* are only ascertained by *human Testimony*, it is plain, by an universal Rule of human reasoning, that they can only operate an *Human Faith*; as also that nothing less than *Divine Testimony*, can be the Foundation of a *Divine Faith*. Because no Conclusion can be of an higher Evidence, than the Premises from whence it is drawn.

Now when it is considered, that the several Doctrins of our Holy Religion, are established upon the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, as their Foundation: It must be obvious, That if there were nothing more than a *Moral Evidence*, and *Human Faith*, for the Certainty of this Truth, *That the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God*: Then by plain Consequence, there could be no other *Bottom*, and *Foundation*, but only this, for all the Doctrins of our Holy Religion, which are so founded: And so the whole of our Religion, could arise no higher, than a mere *Human Faith*. And it is therefore, that neither they of the *Romish Church*, nor of the *Reformed*, have conceived this to be a *solid Bottom*, for the *Divine Grace of Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*. Agreeing well, that the *Foundation* of this *Faith*, can be nothing less, than the *Divine Testimony*, and the *Authority* of God himself.

And altho' those of the *Romish Church*, do not allow the Holy Scriptures, to be the *sole*, the *perfect*, and *adequate Rule of Faith*: Yet they agree with the *Reformed* in two Things: *First*, That every Doctrine established by the Holy Scriptures, hath the *solid Foundation* of *Divine Faith*. And, *Secondly*, That we are to believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*, only upon the *Authority* and *Testi-*

mony of God himself; as the only *solid Foundation* for our belief thereof. Thus far they do agree.

§. III. But then, as to the *way* and *manner*, by which the God of infinite Veracity doth give his Testimony to this great Truth, that the Holy Scriptures are indeed, his own Word: As to this, I say, the *Reformed*, and they of the *Romish Church*, do *hugely* differ.

For the *Romanists* pretend, that the Testimony of God unto this Truth, is given by the *Infallible* and Divine Authority of their Church. As if the Testimony of their Infallible Church, were all one, with the Testimony of God himself; affirming that this is the *Ratio Formalis*, the formal Reason, or Evidence, upon which this great Truth is founded and established.

Whereas, on the other side, the Reformed think this is a sandy Foundation; and no wonder, for so it is. And instead of this, they affirm, that the *Formal Reason*, or rather *Evidence*, upon which our Belief of this Truth is founded, doth lie in those *Κριτήρια*, Characters, or Marks and Indications of the Divine Authority, that are *Intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves: And that the weakened humane Mind, is opened and enabled to discern these, by the *Influence* of the Holy Spirit; and the corrupted Will influenced and inclined by the Divine Grace to embrace them, with that *Firmness of Conviction* and *Assent*, which is called *Faith*. So that the *solid Bottom* upon which that *Faith*, whereby we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*, as it is in this manner evidenced to us, is *founded*; is truly God's *own Authority and Testimony*.

For, when the God of Truth speaks by his Word outwardly, that Holy Word doth carry in itself, *Intrinsically*, those *Κριτήρια*, Marks, and Eviden-

dences, which testify that it is His Holy Word, Which intrinsical Marks and Indications, or Evidences, are displayed unto, and discerned by the Humane Mind, through the Grace of God's Holy Spirit, enlightening and opening the weak Mind.

This is the Rational Account of the *solid* Foundation of that *Faith* by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God, as I have endeavoured to explain it, in the *First Chapter* of this *Second Part*. And altho' those of the *Romish* Church have been at great Pains to obscure and perplex this Question, yet when it is represented in a clear and distinct manner, they must lose all their Labour. Here there is *sure Footing*, *solid Foundation*, which their pretended *Infallibility* can never afford. And all the Mist they have been able to raise upon the *Reformed* Doctrine, relating to the Great Question of the *Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, is at once dissipated, by the Distinct Representation of the Truth, as I have endeavoured to explain it. And it must be owned, that the Handle for raising of that Mist, hath been much owing to the want of due Care in the *Reformed*, of giving such distinct and clear Representation of their own Doctrine, as is needful; and the unguarded manner by which too many of them have expressed themselves.

§. IV. The Doctrine of the *Reformed*, relating both to the *Authority*, and the *Perfection* of the Holy Scriptures, is justly considered as of the highest Consequence; because it concerns the very Foundation of our Holy Religion: And it is by the asserting and vindicating of their Doctrine in both of those Articles, that the Reformed have always been careful to stand in Defence of our Holy Religion; and in opposi-

position to those Errors and Corruptions that have either formerly been introduced upon it, or are at any time endeavoured to be obtruded. And as these are the Great Articles against which Infidels, on the one hand, and the Church of *Rome* on the other, do bend their Force; so there are not wanting Restless Spirits, who are neither *Infidels*, nor *Papists*; and yet are willing to abandon the *Reformed* Doctrine in both of these Articles, upon other Views. And they are as much against the *solid Bottom* and *Foundation* of that *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God, that hath been heretofore unanimously asserted by the *Reformed*; as they are against the sandy *Bottom* upon which the *Romish* Church pretends to found it: And will allow of no other *Foundation* for it, but the *Moral* Evidence by *Tradition*. I have, as is said, endeavoured in the foregoing Chapter of this II. Part, to explain this Doctrine of the *Reformed*, in which they have long unanimously, and are still, agreed, (excepting the few that now desert it) tho' they have not been uniform in their Explication of it. And I shall now, with all the Plainness and Brevity I can, remove all, of any moment, that I have observed to be objected against it, by those Tradition Gentlemen, either by Word, or in Writing*.

And, *First*, it is objected against the Account we have given of that *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God. That it seems to resolve this *Faith*, ultimately, in the Operation of the Holy Spirit: And thereby, to give Countenance to all the Wildness of *Enthusiasm*.

To this I answer, That it is far otherways. For nothing can be more evident than this; That by

* Their Objections against the Perfection of the Holy Scriptures, may be examined at another time.

the Account which we have given of this *Faith*, it doth ultimately resolve, into the Authority of God himself, as that is manifested to the human Mind, by those intrinsical Evidences that are afforded in the Scriptures themselves. But because the human Mind in fall'n Man, is so weakened and corrupted, that of it self, it doth neither discern, nor allow, Access or Admittance of those Evidences; therefore, the Influence of the Holy Spirit, by the Aids of his Grace, is necessary, both to enlighten the weakened Mind, and to open and incline the corrupted Will; so as the human Mind may discern those Evidences of their Divine Authority, that are intrinsically in the Scriptures themselves, with that Conviction and Assent, which is called *Faith*.

And that this may be the better inculcated, and all the Prejudices removed at once, which can arise from this Objection, or from the Mistake on which it is grounded, I do here again, repeat the same Words which I have formerly used, after stating the Controversy concerning the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, as it is tossed betwixt the *Romanists* and the *Reformed*: Altho' the Reader may observe them, only a little above, viz. in Section III. of this same Chapter.

For, when the God of Truth speaks by his Word outwardly, that Holy Word doth carry in it self, intrinsically, those Kεθηα, Marks, and Evidences, which testify that it is his Holy Word. Which Marks and Evidences are displayed unto, and discerned by, the human Mind, through the Grace of Gods Holy Spirit, mercifully enlightening, and opening the weak Mind.

And that I may further illustrate this, and render it yet more obvious, and more distinct, if it is possible for me; I here add, That when Almighty God communicates his Mind to Angels; there is certainly

ly some Evidence, or Evidences, that it is God himself who doth it. In like manner, when he did communicate and impart his Mind to Man, even in the State of Innocency, there was still some Evidence, or Evidences, that it was himself who did it. As also, when *the Word of the Lord* came, of old, to the inspired holy Men, both of the Old, and New Testament, it did certainly still carry with it, a Conviction unto themselves, that it was truly his *Holy Word*, besides all those external Credentials that were often necessary for recommending their Message to others whom it did concern. For, as they had the rational Faculty, as well as other Men, Can we doubt of God's dealing accordingly with them? *i. e.* Suitably to their rational Nature? This cannot in the least be doubted: And therefore, doubtless, there were still such *Keimeia*, Marks, and Evidences, accompanying *the Word of the Lord* which came unto them, as were sufficient for the Conviction of themselves, that it was indeed God's Holy Word. For how could they, before such Conviction, presume to utter it in his Holy Name? Or say, *Thus saith the Lord*? And did not their weak and corrupted Minds, likewise need to be aided, and influenced, that they might duly discern those *Keimeia*, those Marks, and Evidences, with their *Understanding*; and by their *Will*, receive the Conviction they afforded, that it was truly *the Word of God*, which they were then receiving.

And now, if the Case was thus stated, even with Man, in the State of his Innocency: And more especially, if it was necessarily thus, with all those holy Men, who were themselves inspired: Why then, may not the *Word* of the same God, in the Holy Scriptures, likewise manifest it self to be his *Holy Word*, unto our Minds, by those *Keimeia*, those Marks, and Indications, that are intrinsically in it
self;

self; as they are displayed by the merciful Influence of his *Grace*, enlightening and enabling the weak *Understanding* to discern them; and opening and inclining the *Will* to receive them, with the Conviction and Assent of a true Christian *Faith*? Is it not as easy to conceive all this, in the one Case, as in the other? And is it not obvious, that all this merciful Conduct of God with Mankind, may well be, by the ordinary influence of his *Grace*, without the Necessity of any *new Revelation*, or *private Spirit* of the *Enthusiast*?

What is here said, in answer to this first Objection, might indeed, sufficiently serve, for obviating all the other Objections, that do proceed from the same Misunderstanding of our Doctrine, as if it did give Countenance to the Wildness of *Enthusiasm*. But for the Reader's further satisfaction; and because the answering of Objections, doth still more and more, conduce to the clearing of that Account which I have given, of the *Faith* by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God: I proceed to

§. V. A second Objection which is raised upon the same Mistake: 'Tis an Objection that has been urged against me by a Learned Friend of great Merit and eminent Station. And I shall represent it in his own Words, *viz.*

“ That there are only two Ways, by which the
“ Holy Spirit can be supposed to discover any Truth
“ to us: *First*, By express and positive Revelation;
“ as He did to the Inspired Authors of the Old and
“ New Testament. Or, *Secondly*, By those Illumi-
“ nations and Suggestions, which being made to the
“ Rational Faculty, may approve themselves true, to
“ our Reason, by discovering the Connexion of what
“ is so suggested, with some Principles of known and

“ un-

“undoubted Truth. For otherways, they can never
 “be supposed to proceed from Him, who is the Au-
 “thor and Fountain of Reason; and who always, in
 “the ordinary operation of his Spirit, deals with
 “Mankind, in a way suitable to their Rational Na-
 “ture. ——— And seeing we do not pre-
 “tend to any *New* express and positive Revelation
 “for our Conviction of this Truth, *That the Scriptures*
 “*are the Word of God*; therefore it can only be by
 “the second way, viz. By discovering the Connexi-
 “on of this Truth, *That the Scriptures are the Word*
 “*of God*, with some Principle, or Principles, of known
 “and undoubted Truth.” Now this Learned and
 Pious Man is positive — “That Tradition is the
 “only Evidence we can have of this Truth, *That the*
 “*Scriptures are the Word of God*; and that there can
 “be no other Principle, or Principles, of known and
 “undoubted Truth, with which it can have any ne-
 “cessary Connexion. ———

And thus I have stated the Objection in its utmost Force. And in order to answer it, in the more plain and convincing manner, I shall first lay down some Concessions which cannot fail to take off, all the groundless Prejudices against the Doctrine of the Reformed, upon this Subject, as we have now explained it; and so to vindicate it, absolutely, from all Jealousy of having the least tendency to the wildness of Enthusiasm. And then I shall proceed to answer the Objection directly.

And, *First*, It is frankly owned, and I do expressly affirm, That the Doctrine of the Reformed, as it is explained in the foregoing Chapters, is far from supposing any *new*, express, and positive Revelation to be necessary for our Conviction of this Truth, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*. For it is unquestionably true, that this would indeed, open a door to all the wildness of Enthusiasm.

Second-

Secondly, It is owned, That Tradition doth afford a rational, sufficient, and most convincing *moral* Proof of this Great Truth, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*. For as the eminent Person objecting, doth well observe: "God in his Infinite Wisdom hath fixed some Rules, by which we must go, in assenting to Propositions that are advanced, and by which Man must direct his Practice. And among these, this is one; That he must Believe the truthness of Facts, which he himself hath not perceived by his own personal Senses; upon the Testimony of veracious and credible Witnesses. And that God hath Revealed those Positive-Doctrines of the Gospel that have no Connexion with those Principles which Reason dictates, is a Matter of *Fact*. And the Divine Attestation of this Revelation by Prophecy, and Miracle, is another Matter of *Fact*. And that the Books of Scripture, containing these Doctrines, and that Divine Attestation of them, had for their Authors, those Holy and Inspired Men, who gave sufficient Evidence of their Divine Authority; is also Matter of *Fact*. Now of Matters of *Fact*, the Testimony of credible Witnesses, against whom there is no just Exception, is certainly a most competent Proof: And that Tradition doth afford this Testimony is most certain." I think, from what is before fully represented, the Reader must be convinced, that I am duly apprised, and fully satisfied of the convincing Force of this *Moral* Proof, by human Testimony and Tradition: This is manifest by the First Chapter of the First Part of this Treatise.

It is also owned, *Thirdly*, That as the same Learned Person objecting, doth observe, "The Holy Spirit, in the ordinary way of his Operation, doth indeed, act on the Reason of Man, in the way of Argument, or Discourse: And that, from Topicks,
" or

“ or Principles, of certain and undoubted Truth.” And I am ready to grant, that it is always so, when he is mercifully pleased to use his Divine Influence, for our Conviction of any Truth that hath Connexion with such certain and undoubted Principles: And at the same time, it is no less to be own’d, That all such Truths, as have no such Connexion with such certain and undoubted Principles, yet being revealed by God, they are, for that Reason, to be assented unto, upon his own *Word*. For,

It is also own’d, *Fourthly*, As to those great Truths of our Holy Religion, which have no such Connexion with those known Principles of certain and undoubted Truth: Such as, the Doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*; the *Incarnation*, the *Hypostatical Union*, the Offices of *Jesus Christ*, as *Mediator*; His *Satisfaction*; and his *Second Coming to Judgment*; and some other positive Doctrines: It is own’d, I say, that as the same Learned and Pious Man hath observed in the Remarks he sent me, The Assent of the human Mind unto them, is only built upon the Veracity of God, who doth reveal them to us, in his Holy *Word*; together with the Evidence we have, that it is indeed his Holy *Word*, that doth reveal those great Truths to us.

Fifthly, It is on all hands agreed and own’d, that the human Mind must have a solid Bottom to rest upon, for its Conviction of this Truth, *That it is indeed, the Word of God, which doth reveal those Doctrines to us*. And it is manifest, from what hath been before represented, as well as by the second of the Things here own’d, that we do likewise agree, that *Tradition* is a very solid *Moral Proof*; and such as the human Mind may well rest upon, for its Conviction, *That it is indeed, the Word of God, that doth reveal those great Truths to us*: Yea, that this *Moral Proof*

Proof thereof, is sufficient for the Conviction of an Infidel.

Now, these Concessions do so fully take off, all the groundless Prejudices against the Doctrine of the *Reformed* upon this Subject, as this their Doctrine hath been explained by us, that they ought for ever to prevent Mistakes about it. But then, after all, it is easy to shew, that the Objection is so far from subverting, that it doth not in the least shake, or annoy our Doctrine.

§. VI. For our present enquiry is not at all, concerning such a solid Bottom as may satisfy the Mind with a *moral* Certainty. No. We allow Tradition by human Testimony, to be sufficient for this. But our Enquiry is concerning a solid Bottom for that *Divine Grace of Faith*, by which it is believed, *that it is indeed the Word of God, which doth reveal those Great Truths of our Religion*: Concerning that solid Bottom and Foundation for a *Divine* (not a Human) *Faith*; upon which the Mind of a sincere Christian may rest.

And indeed, it is astonishing, *First*, to find Men of Learning, that are habituated to examine Things with Application, affirming that any *Moral* Proof by *Tradition*, which is only human Testimony, can be the solid Bottom and Foundation for this; after all that hath been said and published upon that very Subject, by so many Learned Men, both of the *Romish* Church and the *Reformed*.

And, *Secondly*, It is no less astonishing, to find Men both of Piety and Learning, affirming that *Tradition* is the only solid Bottom and Foundation for this *Faith*, by which we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God: And that there can be no other. It is certainly a melancholy Proof, of the powerful Influence of party Spirit, wherever it obtains.

As to the first of these Affirmations, viz. *That Tradition is the only solid Bottom and Foundation for this Faith.* Is it not strange, that altho' it is evident to common Sense, that nothing less than *Divine Testimony* can be a solid Foundation for *Divine Faith*; yet that even they who do themselves think this, and own it, and who will also very readily grant, that no Conclusion of any Argument, can be stronger than the Premises from whence it is drawn; will not yet be convinced, that this first of their two Assertions, is a plain Contradiction to these two most obvious Truths.

If you ask them, Why they believe those great Truths of our Holy Religion that have no connexion with any Principles of known and undoubted Truth? They answer, It is upon the Testimony of God, who reveals them in the Scriptures. If you ask again, What is the solid Foundation of their Belief of this Truth, *That the Scriptures in which those Great Truths are revealed, are indeed his own Divine Word?* They answer, That *Tradition* by human Testimony is the solid Foundation of this Belief; yea, the only solid Foundation thereof.

Now, let it be considered, that it is agreed on all sides, that the Testimony of God himself is the only solid Foundation of that *Faith*, by which we believe those Great Truths of our Holy Religion, that are taught in Scripture, but have no necessary connexion with any self-evident Principles of known and undoubted Truth. This I say, is agreed on all sides. But then it can never consist with this, That *Tradition* by Human Testimony can be the only solid Foundation for our Belief, that the Scriptures which teach those Great Truths, are the Revelation of God.

For, is not this reasoning obvious? viz. If the *Tradition* of human Testimony, were the only solid Foundation for our Belief of this Proposition; *The*
Script-

Scriptures which teach those Great Truths, are indeed the Word of God: Then it would necessarily follow, by a plain Consequence, *a primo ad ultimum*, (i. e. from the first Link to the last Link of the Argument) that the *only Foundation* of our Belief of those Great Truths, is *originally* no other, but *Tradition by Human Testimony*: And therefore, not the *Testimony of God*. Unless you'll say, *Tradition is Divine Testimony*, as the *Romish Church* says of their *infallible Authority*. Because no Conclusion can be stronger than the Premises from whence it is drawn. And this is the Absurdity which both the *Romish* and the *Reformed*, have been equally careful to avoid. Being well aware of both sides, that human Testimony, such as Tradition is, can only be the solid Bottom and Foundation of *Human*, but never of a *Divine Faith*.

'Tis very true, that Tradition is an useful *Moral Proof* of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and excellently adapted for the Conviction of an Infidel. 'Tis true, that this *Moral Evidence* is an excellent Introduction to the *Divine Grace of Faith*. But for the Reasons that I have often represented, it is not, it cannot be, the *solid Bottom* of the Christian *Faith*. No Human Testimony can be the solid Foundation of this Divine Superstructure. And as I have said, it is astonishing, to find Men of Learning affirming this.

But then, *Secondly*, Altho' it were true, that *Tradition*, which is an excellent *Moral Evidence*, were also a *solid Foundation*, for that *Divine Grace of Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*; which I have proved it is not, and cannot at all be: Yet why should any Christians, why should they who affirm it, be dissatisfied with that real and solid Foundation of this *Faith*, upon which the *Reformed* have affirmed it to be built? A Bottom that will well bear this Divine Superstru-

sure: And at the same time, is no ways inconsistent with any other Principle which they do themselves own. As is evident, by the manner in which I have explained it, in this, and the two foregoing Chapters. Wherefore then, do they affirm, That *Tradition* is the only solid Foundation, on which this *Faith* is built, and that there can be no other? Indeed it is astonishing, to find Men of Piety as well as Learning, affirming this. And it seems to be partly from a needless Fear of opening a Door to the *wild Enthusiasm*: For the Objection we are answering doth intimate this, by affirming, as above.

§. VII. "That there can be no other Principles of known and undoubted Truth, with which this Proposition, *The Scriptures are the Word of God*, may have any necessary connexion."

In order to answer this, wherein the Strength of the Objection doth lie, it being the only point of Difficulty; I must drop one Thing by the Way, viz. That I presume, by *Principles of known and undoubted Truth*, (which are the Words in the Objection) is only meant, such Principles as are evidently certain and undoubted, so soon as they are known. Because the Truth or Certainty of any Principle whatsoever, doth not depend on our Knowledge of it, antecedent to its being manifested to us.

And having premised this, I come now to answer the chief Point of Difficulty. And if the Reader shall look back into Chapter I. of Part II. Sections V. and VI. He will find some such *Criteria* there mentioned, that are *intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves, as may, and do afford, those Principles of certain and undoubted Truth, with which this Proposition, *The Scriptures are the Word of God*, hath a necessary Connexion. Which Principles, together with that necessary Connexion, tho' the human Mind

was not before conscious of them ; yet they become, both of them, obvious to it, as soon as those *Criteria* are displayed and manifested to it, by the Aids and Influence of the *Divine Grace* ; establishing in the Mind a Conviction that fills it with a delightful Satisfaction, tho' not in the way of *Science*, yet in the more noble and more laudable way of *Faith*.

And altho' this brief Answer doth not need any further Illustration, to an Intelligent Reader, who hath duly adverted to what hath been before layed down, in this, and the foregoing Chapters : Yet for the sake of those who are less attentive, and less accustomed to notice and apply Things that are only briefly suggested, or insinuated ; I shall here therefore illustrate this Answer, to render it as plain as is possible, *viz.* as followeth.

In the way of humane *Science*, the Conviction of any Truth, is derived from some Principle, or Principles of certain and undoubted Truth, that are Self-evident, so as the humane Mind cannot forbear to assent unto them, as soon as they are presented to it. And it is the necessary Connexion of that Truth, with such Principle, or Principles, of Self-evidence, that doth work the Conviction in the way of *Science*.

Now there are two Principles of this kind, *viz.* *That Infinite Knowledge cannot be Deceived : And, That Infinite Truth cannot Deceive.* And therefore the humane Mind, yea, the most obstinate and perverse Mind, cannot forbear to give Assent to this Proposition ; *Whatever is asserted by the God of Infinite Knowledge, and Infinite Truth, is a certain and undoubted Truth : Because it hath a necessary Connexion with the said two self-evident Principles.*

And if there were any self-evident Principle, with which this Proposition, *The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God*, might have a necessary Connexion ; then the humane Mind could not forbear to assent

to it. But withal, this Assent would be from the *Evidence of Science*, and could not be the *Assent of Faith*.

Again, If the assent unto this Proposition, *The Scriptures are the Word of God*, (or what is to the same purpose, The Doctrins contained in the Scriptures are Revealed by God) were only from the *Moral Evidence of Human Testimony and Tradition*; then, the assent would indeed be very just. For the *Moral Evidence* is truly such as may convince an Infidel; altho' it doth not force the assent in such manner, as the Evidence of *Science* doth. But it being only, upon the Testimony of Men, it can therefore, only be the assent of *Human Faith*, or a *Faith upon Human Testimony*.

And consequently, to render our assent to this Proposition, *The Scriptures are the Word of God*, (or what is to the same Purpose; The Doctrins contained in Scripture, are revealed by God) I say, to render our assent to this, a *Divine Faith*, nothing less is necessary, than the *Testimony of God*. Because nothing less than this, can be the *solid Foundation* of a *Divine Faith*, as hath been often inculcated.

And indeed, that necessary Divine Testimony is mercifully given to this Proposition, *The Scriptures are the Word of God*. And this is not by any other Word of God, or by any *new Revelation*; but in the manner that I have, in this same *Chapter*, twice before represented. And I shall here again repeat it, the third time, in the same Words, *viz.* "For, "when the God of Truth speaks by his Word outwardly, that Holy Word doth carry in itself, intrinsically, those *Criteria*, Marks, and Evidences, "that it is indeed his Holy Word, by which the "Conviction of this Truth, is carried home upon "the human Mind. Which *Criteria*, Marks, and "Evidences, are displayed unto, and discerned by "the Human Mind, through the Grace of God's
"Holy

“ Holy Spirit, mercifully enlightening and opening
“ the weak and corrupted Mind.”

Indeed, the Principles of human *Science*, do so carry home their Evidence upon the human Mind, even in its natural Weakness and Corruption, that they force an Assent, as soon as they are proposed to it. For Example, That the *Whole is greater than any Part of it self. That it is impossible for any thing to be; and yet at the same time not to be. That two Contradictories cannot be both of them true; or both of them false.* The human Mind, that is but endowed with common Sense, how weak, and how corrupted soever it be; yet cannot forbear assenting to them, as soon as they are proposed to it. And further also, it cannot forbear its assent unto what Truths soever, are evidently drawn from such self-evident Principles, as soon as it perceives their necessary Connexion with them. Thus it is in the Way of *Science*. But in the Way of *Faith* it is far otherwise.

§. VIII. For, tho' there is indeed, one Axiom, or self-evident Principle of *Science*, to introduce the Evidence of the *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, viz. *That whatever is asserted by the God of infinite Knowledge, and infinite Truth, is a certain and undoubted Truth.* A Principle that doth force the assent. Yet *Faith* begins and proceeds in a more noble and more laudable Way, which I chuse here to represent in the following manner.

The material Object of *Faith*, (i. e. the Things under its View) is neither the Principles, nor the Deductions or Inferences of human *Science*: But *Divine Revelation*, manifested to the human Mind, and received by it, in the more laudable Way. And this Manifestation of that Divine Revelation, is by the Schoolmen termed, *The formal Object of Faith*, i. e.

The Evidence by which the human Mind is convinced, that it is truly the Divine Revelation.

Now it is obvious, that this Manifestation is not such a Self-evidence as doth force the assent. For this Proposition, which is the fundamental Principle of our Christian Faith, *The Scripture*, (or the Doctrine contained therein) *is of Divine Revelation*, is not of such self-evidence as the Principles of Human Science: Because the human Mind, which cannot forbear to assent unto them, as soon as they are proposed to it; doth yet find no such force upon itself, to give its assent, when this Proposition is offered to it. But on the contrary, as on the one hand the Faith that God doth require, and will accept, must be the *Choice*, and Exercise or Act, of a *free and willing Mind*: So on the other hand, such is our corrupt Nature, that the weak and vicious Mind of fall'n Man, doth not (of it self) perceive the Evidence of this Proposition, which is the fundamental Principle of *Faith*; and is likewise averse from assenting to it.

But, forasmuch as the Great Creator of the Humane Mind, in all his Applications to it, doth deal with it, suitably to its Nature, *i. e.* as endowed with Reason, tho' now such Reason as is exceedingly weakened and corrupted: Therefore, He who hath Revealed his Truths, and Intimated his Will to us, in the Holy Scriptures, for rescuing us from a State of Sin and eternal Ruin; and for the promoting our everlasting Happiness, hath mercifully so ordered and provided, That altho' this Proposition, *The Scripture* (or the Doctrine contained therein) *is of Divine Revelation*, is not an Axiom or Principle of Self-evidence; in such manner as to *Force* our Assent, like the Principles of humane Science; yet, it being the fundamental Principle of our Christian Faith, it is so provided, I say, by our merciful God,
That

That they who sincerely desire to know the Will of God, and to embrace and cleave to it, as soon as it is Discovered ; while they seriously Read, or Hear, and Meditate upon, the Holy Scriptures ; and pray to God, with Earnestness and Importunity, for his Direction and Assistance ; they do, by the Aids of the Divine *Grace*, enlightening their weak Mind, and inclining their perverse Will ; observe and discern such Intimations and Evidences, *Intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves, as fail not to convince them, that they are indeed the Revelation of God.

And altho' an obstinate and perverse Mind, may, and doth often, wilfully avert the Attention from those intrinsical Evidences, and resist this Conviction : Yet the humble and sincere, receive it with Joy and Comfort. And it is in this, that the Virtue of *Faith* doth lie. It is this that obtains its Acceptation, its Praise, and its Reward. It is not such an assent of *Force*, as the Mind cannot forbear to yield : But an assent of laudable Humility : And yet at the same time, an assent that is highly rational.

I say *highly rational*, because the Mind that is duly disposed, doth perceive a necessary Connexion, betwixt those *Criteria*, those Marks, and Evidences, that are *intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves, and this Proposition, which is the fundamental Principle of our *Faith*, *The Scripture* (or the Doctrine contained therein) *is the Revelation of God*. For those *Criteria*, or Evidences, do abundantly render this Proposition manifest, as soon as they are displayed to the sincere and humble Mind, by the merciful and necessary Aids of the Divine *Grace*. And altho' this Conviction and Assent, is not in the way of *Science* ; yet it bears some resemblance to it, in this respect, that the Assent is not given without a most Rational Conviction : A Conviction that gives the most absolute Satisfaction to the Humane Mind.

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I have not indeed pretended, to make any full and complete enumeration of the *Criteria*, Marks, and Evidences of Divine Revelation, that are *Intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves; nor, I suppose, can any Man pretend to do it. For to different Men, in their differing Circumstances, Capacities and Opportunities, those Evidences which carry home the Conviction, may be hugely different. Nay, to some well-disposed Minds, some Evidences and Intrinsical Marks of Divine Revelation, may be convincing Intimations; which do not at all occur to the Observation of others, who are no less sincerely disposed. But if any sincere and candid Reader, of a Disposition so Pious, as the Learned Framer of this Objection I am answering, was truly blessed with, shall deliberately Consider, even that short, imperfect enumeration of them, represented in the fifth and sixth Numbers of the first *Chapter* of this *Second Part*, he will not be so daring, as to refuse that they do abundantly afford such Principles, tho' not of Self-evidence, yet of certain and undoubted Truth, as truly have a necessary Connexion with this Proposition, *The Scripture*, (or the Doctrine contained therein) *is of Divine Revelation*. For they are truly such, as it can be nothing less than *Divine Revelation*, that doth intrinsically carry them in it self: And this becomes clear and convincing, as soon as they are discerned and duly adverted unto, by the Aids and Influence of the *Divine Grace*. And therefore, it may well be said, that this is a prime Principle, and fundamental Axiom of *Faith*, as it doth carry along with it, an absolute and full sufficiency of Evidence, to the duly disposed Mind, that doth read, and hear attentively, and meditate upon, the Scriptures; with a sincere desire to know the Will of God, and to embrace and obey it, as soon as it is manifested. And it is in this sense, that the Reformed Divines ought to be

be understood, when they say, The Scriptures prove themselves to be the Word of God : And not, as if they meant, that they do so, by some particular Text, or Texts, asserting it.

I suppose by this time, the Answer that was briefly given to the Objection, near the beginning of *Section VII.* of this Chapter, is sufficiently explained, and illustrated, so as entirely to remove it. And I proceed to a

§. IX. Third Objection. The Reader may observe, that I have again, and again, in this, and the foregoing Chapters, together with the other *Reasons*, Marks, and Evidences, of Divine Revelation, that are intrinsically in the Scriptures themselves, mentioned more especially, their unexpressible *Energy* and *Force*, for convincing, exhorting, comforting, humbling, and yet encouraging the Christian Soul : And the sensible Experience of this their Power and Efficacy upon the Heart and Life : And the repeated Experience of this, by the continued Influence of the Divine *Grace*, still co-operating : As that which doth not only conduce to beget ; but doth encrease, strengthen, and perfect, and crown, the Conviction of *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God. The special Mention of this, had been briefly layed before the Learned Person, who sent me the Objections I am now answering. And against this he objects, in the following Words, viz.

“ The greatest *Enthusiasts*, do ordinarily make the
 “ greatest Pretensions to that *experimental Feeling*
 “ you speak of ; and I doubt not, sincerely believe
 “ themselves to have, what they so much pretend to,
 “ &c.”

I confess, this is an Objection that I did least expect, from one of so distinguished Piety. For I have
 often

often been much edified in Conversation with him : And have sometimes heard him speak from his own Experience, of this *Power* and *Efficacy* of the Holy Scriptures, and the solacing Comfort it afforded him. And I truly think, there have been few Men in this Age, that had more of this *Experience*. However, this must have an Answer : And it shall be short and plain, *viz.*

It is certain, that there are some false Principles, from which some Men do reason : And that Men do often falsely reason from Principles that are true and solid : And yet at the same time, believe themselves to be reasoning well and truly. Now, can it follow from this, that there are no true Principles, and no true Reasoning ? Or that none can be ascertained that they reason truly ? Again, it is no less certain, that there are many Hypocrites, and that the Heart of Man is so deceitful, that some do really think they are sincere, and do not perceive the Hypocrisy that is *latent* in their own Heart. But it cannot follow from this, that there are no sincere Christians : Or that none can have the solid Conviction of their own Sincerity.

Now it is so easy to apply this, to the Case under View, that I need only say, That tho' there are many Hypocrites, and some Brain-sick People, whose Imagination is disturbed, and clouded with melancholy Humours ; that boast of their *experimental Feelings*, and believe they really have them : Yet I hope there are some sincere Souls, of a solid Judgment, clear Understanding, and undisturbed Imagination : And if they have the Experience of the *Power* and *Efficacy* of the Holy Scriptures, upon their own Heart and Life ; what should hinder it to be to them, a solid Ground of Conviction, that they are indeed, the Word of God ? Did not our Saviour
reason

reason truly, from this Principle, *The Tree is known by its Fruits?*

§. X. There yet remains one Objection that well deserves to be noticed, which hath been also sent me, by the same Learned and Eminent Hand: And as it is abundantly specious, so it is much reckoned upon, as very pungent and unanswerable. I shall give it in his own Words, *viz.* "Even in those early Ages, wherein the extraordinary Gifts were continued, and in which, the Canon of the New Testament, was first settled: In the settling of this, they proceeded on no other Evidence, but that of *Tradition* alone. And therefore, some of the Books of the New Testament, were for some time doubted of, by some Churches, as well as particular Persons, till they were fully satisfied of their being wrote by those who had given Proof of their being divinely inspired."

The Inference aimed at, is this. That seeing they only proceeded then, upon *Tradition* alone; Therefore *Tradition* alone, is a good Evidence: And there can be no other. For, had there been any other Evidence, they would doubtless have used it then.

I hope to convince every Reader, that how specious soever this reasoning seems to be, yet really there is no Force in it. And I shall do it with all the Plainness and Brevity I can. And in order thereto, I shall premise three Things that are to be observed.

First, When God is mercifully pleased to bestow his extraordinary Gift of Divine Inspiration, as he hath himself the Choice of his own Organs and Instruments; so their Inspiration is only to serve those Purposes for which he hath design'd it. And therefore, altho' this Gift of Inspiration did continue in the Christian Church, during some Ages after the Death

Death of the Apostles, and Penmen of the New Testament: And doubtless did answer the merciful Design of God, for those Purposes to which he did continue it with his Church; yet the *Rule*, the *standing Rule* of our *Faith*, and *Life*, or *Manners*, which God designed to be perpetual, is confined to those Writings which compleat the Canon of the New Testament, together with the Old Testament formerly compleated. Accordingly we find, that though there were not wanting inspired Persons in the Church of *Corinth*, as is evident from the 12th. and 14th. Chapters of 1 *Cor.* Yet the Directions and Writings of *St. Paul*, were to be the *standing Rule* to the inspired themselves, as well as others. See to this purpose, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 37. And in like manner, what number soever there might be of inspired Persons at *Colosse* and *Laodicea*, yet *St. Paul* doth thus write to the *Colossians*, iv. 16. *And when this Epistle is read amongst you, Cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans: and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea* *. Because his Writings were to be the *standing Rule* to all of them. And withal, any of the Writings of the Apostles that may have perished, do not seem to have been designed by God, for any part of the *standing Rule* to his Church.

Secondly, As the Church of *Colosse* had that Epistle written from *Laodicea* (to enlarge their *standing Rule*) only by the special Order of *St. Paul* recommending it; so some of those particular Churches that were first planted, might long be unacquainted with some of the *Canonical Writings*, by reason of their not being recommended to them. And this may well be supposed to be the Reason why some of the *Canonical Writings*, were not received by some particular

* The 1 *Tim.* is supposed to be that from *Laodicea*.

Churches, until after mature Examination. Altho' at the same time, every one of those Churches enjoyed still as much of the *Canonical Writings*, as might suffice to be their *Rule* in all *Necessaries*.

Thirdly, When the Correspondence of the several particular Churches was well established; and the Rulers of the respective Districts thereof, were collecting the several *Canonical Writings* into one Book of the New Testament; it was not only *Prudent*, but *Necessary* for them, to proceed in this their Collecting, only upon such Grounds as were convincing to Infidels and Pagans, as well as professed Christians: and Convincing not only to the truly Sincere and Faithful; but also to those that were not so, altho' they were professed Christians.

Now, after premising those three Things, which are like so many *Postulata*; it is easy from them, especially from the last of them, to give a satisfying Answer to the specious Objection.

For, let it, for once, be supposed, that every one of those who were Employed in the making this Collection of the *Canonical Books*, had truly that *Conviction of Faith*, (as I have represented it) that those several Writings, which upon mature Examination, they engrossed into the *Canon* of the New Testament, were truly Divine Revelation; yea, that this *Conviction* was wrought in them, precisely in that manner as I have explained it, in this and the foregoing Chapters. Yea, let it be further supposed, that none can Believe any Books of the New Testament to be the *Word of God*, by the *Conviction of Faith*, but they only, in whom that *Conviction* is wrought in that same manner. Yet, even upon the Supposal of all this, They who Collected the *Canonical Writings*, could not *Prudently*, they could not in *Reason*, and as Men of good Sense, proceed in their said Collecting, upon any other Ground, than the *moral Proof* by

Tra-

Tradition : And therefore, their proceeding only upon that Ground, can be no just Exception against our Doctrine, and Explication of that *Faith*, by which the Sincere Christian doth Believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God.

Now, that even upon all the foresaid Supposal, They who Collected the *Canonical* Writings, could not in *Prudence*, or Reason, proceed upon any other Ground than the *moral* Proof by *Tradition*, is obviously plain and certain, from the *third* of the things premised, *viz.* That it was not only *Prudent*, but *Necessary* for them, to proceed upon such Grounds as were convincing to Infidels and Pagans, as well as professed Christians; and convincing not only to the truly Sincere and *Faithful*; but to those likewise that were not so, tho' they were professed Christians.

For, 1st, Even upon the said Supposal, how strong soever this *Conviction* of *Faith* was upon their own Mind; yet they could not turn it into an Argument for the Conviction of Infidels, or unsincere Christians. The *Intrinsical* *Keenness*, *Marks*, and *Evidences*, could not be discerned by such : And their own *Experimental Feeling* was an Evidence, not to Mankind in general, but only to every such Individual as was endowed with the same *Grace* which they had themselves. For, with respect to others, tho' it might be such a Motive to peruse and search into the *Canonical* Writings, with a sincere desire to find their Excellency and Profit, as the Psalmist useth, when he says, *O taste and see that the Lord is good* : Yet it could never be turned into an Argument for their Conviction, until they also had the same *Experience*. For who among Infidels and the unsincere Hypocrites, would have regard to their Report ?

Yea, 2^{dly}, Let it even be further supposed, that they had been themselves, all of them Inspired. And likewise been endowed with the Power of working
Miracles.

Miracles, to prove their Inspiration was Divine; and that consequently such Collection of the *Canonical* Writing, as they did make, was by Divine Inspiration and Authority. Yet in the following Ages of Christianity, such Evidence of this *Fact*, as might be convincing to Infidels, and unsincere Christians, to Mankind in general; could be no other than the *Moral* proof by *Tradition*; unless that same Inspiration, and Miracles too, to attest it, had been continued from one Generation to another. So that even upon both the aforesaid Suppositions, they who collected the *Canonical* Writings, acting as Men of *Prudence* and *Good Sense*, with a Design of settling the *Canon* of the Scripture as a *Rule* to Mankind in general, were under a Necessity of confining themselves to such kind of Evidence, as might be convincing even to Infidels; and unsincere Christians, as well as to the *Faithful*. And such is the *Moral* Proof by *Tradition*, in a most pregnant manner. However, at the same time, all the Conviction which this *Moral* Proof can give, serves only as an Introduction to the *Evidence* of *Faith*: Of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures (or the Doctrine contained therein) to be the Revelation of God. In a Word, when sincere Christians are comparing their own Observation for mutual Edification and Comfort, they may well impart to one another, those *intrinsic* *Evidences* which the Holy Scriptures do afford, that are most convincing, respectively to each of themselves: And not only mention the *Power* and *Efficacy* of the Holy Scriptures upon their own Hearts and Lives in the general: But make their respective Remarks, and mention such particular Portions of Holy Writ, as have more particularly, and more powerfully, instructed, reprov'd, awakened, humbled, or comforted, themselves, in their several Circumstances of Capacity

or Situation, under the variety, or special Turns of Providence. But, how pregnant and strong soever the Conviction may be, that this doth afford, to themselves, of the Divine Authority of the Scripture: Yet all of this their Observation and *Experience*, can never be turn'd into an Argument for the Conviction of an Infidel, or a profane and unsincere professed Christian. And withal, such unsincere, are the greatest Part professing Christianity.

Yea, tho' the Hearts and Secrets of every sincere Christian, were intimately known to each other, as they are not; yet all their *Observation* and *Experience*, joined together, could never be turn'd into an Argument for the Conviction of others. And all that could be urged from it, were only this, *O taste and see*. But would it not be a foolish Inference, to conclude from all this, That there are no such *intrinsic Evidences* afforded in the Scriptures themselves: That there are no sincere Christians who are capable to observe them; Or of perceiving by Experience, the *Power* and *Efficacy* of the Scriptures upon their own Hearts and Lives: And that all this is not sufficient, by the Divine *Grace*, to work that Conviction of Divine *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be of Divine Inspiration? Can nothing be *true* in it self, and a comfortable Truth too, unto sincere Christians, unless it may be turned into an Argument for the Conviction of Infidels, profane Christians, and Hypocrites?

Is not a plain Text from St. *Peter*, or St. *Paul*, a convincing Evidence of any Truth of our Holy Religion among Christians; although it cannot be turned into an Argument for the Conviction of *Jews* and *Pagans*, who would have laughed at the ancient Apologists, if they had heard them urge it? And what should hinder the Conviction of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scrip-

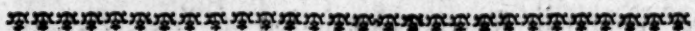
Scriptures to be the Word of God, to be wrought by those *Evidences* that are *intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves, through the Aids of the Divine Grace; together with the *Experience* of their Power and Energy upon the Heart and Life? Although all that Conviction thereby afforded, can never be turned into an Argument for the Conviction of *Jews*, *Pagans*, or unsincere, and yet professed, Christians.

I conceive what is said, is sufficient to take off any seeming Difficulty arising from the Objection last proposed; and fully to satisfy, that it doth conclude nothing against our Doctrine, concerning that *Evidence of Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be of Divine Revelation. For tho' it is an *Evidence* of the strongest Conviction; and is completely sufficient to every individual *faithful* Soul: Yet it cannot be turned into an Argument for the Conviction of *Jews*, *Pagans*, and *Infidels* of any Sort; or of unsincere, and yet professed Christians.

And seeing the greatest Part of Mankind doth consist of such Persons, upon whom it could not be urged as a convincing Argument; Therefore, it could not in *Prudence* and *Reason*, it could not in *Common Sense*, be proceeded upon, by those who collected the *Canon* of the New Testament: Because it could not answer their Purpose, which was the Conviction of Mankind in general. And consequently the Objection falls to the Ground. And how specious soever it may seem to be, at first view; yet it is really of no weight, and doth not in the least affect, or shake our Doctrine.

I have now answered all the Objections which deserve to be noticed, that have been offered to me, either by Conference or Writing; relating to the *Evidence* of the *Faith*, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God, as it hath been

briefly represented and explained in the first Chapter, and further explained both in this, and the foregoing Chapters. And altho' I think any attentive Reader, may from what is said, be sufficiently enabled to answer any thing that can be further objected: And that therefore the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches upon this Article standeth firm. Yet there is an unreasonable and captious Demand of the *Romish* Writers, in order to weaken and oppose the Doctrine of the Reformed, upon the Authority of the Holy Scriptures: The examining whereof, will still further conduce, to illustrate the Account I have given, of that *Faith* by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures (or the Doctrine contained therein) to be the Revelation of God. And the Examination of it, shall be the Subject of the following Chapter.



CHAP. IV.

In which, an unreasonable Demand of the Romish Writers, in order to weaken and oppose the Doctrine of the Reformed, upon the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, is at some length examined.

§. I. **I**T is usual among the Controversial Writers of the *Romish* Church, and their Missionaries have it still in readiness, to puzzle the Reformed with a glaring and specious Demand, viz. That they may read in the hearing of the sincere Protestant Believer, some Sentences of *Canonical* Scripture, and thereafter, some Sentences of the *Apocryphal*, or framed

framed in Imitation of Scripture: And then let him tell, by all the help of his *intrinsical Criteria*, and his pretended *Testimony of the Holy Spirit*, which is the true? and which the counterfeit? And from them, the *Freethinkers* too, have learned to insult prophanely with the same Demand. And there is likewise a Set of *Reformed Divines* sprung up of late, who build all the *Conviction* of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, upon the *Moral Evidence* from *Facts*, and *Tradition*: Who are not ashamed to propose, and push the same Difficulty.

Now, that none who shall read the foregoing Chapters may be stumbled by this amusing Quirk of seeming Difficulty, although it doth scarcely consist with my designed Brevity, I shall however, in this Chapter, by itself, make some plain Remarks upon it.

And, *First*, Let the *Protestant* in his turn, read some Sentences of the *vulgar Latin Bible*; and next also his counterfeited Sentences, in the hearing of the *Papist*: And then try, if the pretended *infallibility* of his *Romish Church*, can enable him any better than the *Protestants* are enabled, to distinguish the genuine Scripture from the counterfeit. And if it were not sinful, to institute such prophane Comparisons, let the Experiment be retorted in the same manner, upon the Man who pretends to no other Conviction than what is drawn from *Facts*, and *Historical Tradition*: And it will soon be seen, that these can afford no Advantage for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit, any better than the sincere Believer hath, whose Conviction is established upon the *Evidence of Faith*. As to the *Freethinker*, who makes them all the Subject of his Jest, the Demand as from him, calls for a separate and special Consideration; and shall be touched upon, in the sequel of this Chapter. But it is obvious, that the *Papist*, and the Man who doth build all, upon the

Evidence drawn from Facts, and Historical Tradition; have both of them, the same Concern, to take off this Difficulty, that the sincere *Christian* hath, who doth avouch the *Evidence of Faith*, for the establishing of his Conviction.

If the *Papist* shall reply, That his whole Bible hath the *Infallible* Authority of his Church stamped upon it, and that if the Sentences are not pointed to him therein; he is not concerned, and ought not to be amused with them. Then I need not here answer, that this is only to beg the Question, relating to the pretended *Infallibility* of their Church. No. For there is at hand, another Question upon him, *viz.* How comes he by the same *Infallible* Certainty, with respect to every Sentence, of every Copy of his Bible? Hath his pretended *Infallible* Church, Revised and Corrected every Sentence, of every Copy, of the numerous Editions, or variety of Impressions? Or where, and when did it this? And is he *infallibly* ascertained that his own Copy is thus stamped and authorized? Or doth the same *Infallibility* of his Church, *infallibly* guide all the Printers, or all the Correctors, of all the Impressions, in every Sentence; not to mention all the Transcribers? For without the *Infallible* Certainty of all this, when the respective Sentences are proposed to him, he must at least be as much embarrassed, as the *Protestant*. Are there no Copies at all, into which the smallest Errors may have crept? We need not here dispute against the pretended *Infallibility* of their Church: Nor to ask the Question, Who are the Persons in whom it is lodged? A Question to which it will be long before they agree in one common Answer. For without descending into this, it is obvious; that the *Papists* are as much concerned as the *Protestants*, to remove any seeming Difficulty arising from this amusing Captious Quirk.

Secondly,

Secondly, All the Romish, as well as all the Reformed, are well agreed, that the Words which I have cited, in *Chap. II. Sect. II.* from the Prophet *Jer. xxiii. 28, 29.* are undoubtedly Canonical Scripture, viz. *The Prophet that hath a Dream, let him tell his Dream: And he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully. What is the Chaff to the Wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my Word like a Fire? saith the Lord; and as a Hammer that breaketh the Rock in pieces?* And I think I may presume, that neither *Papist*, nor *Protestant*, will have the face to deny, that here the Lord himself doth, by the Mouth of his Prophet, expressly institute the Comparison between his own *Word*, and that which was then counterfeited by the false Prophets. And when the Lord says, in the Comparison, *What is the Chaff to the Wheat?* It must undoubtedly signify, that the *Excellency* and *Power* of the one, beyond the other, was to be discerned, at least, by somebody; at least, by some of those who heard them both. Indeed, the History of that time, and the Contents of that Book of *Jeremiah*, do testify, that neither the King, nor the Rulers, nor the Body of the Priests, or of the People, did so distinguish. But that some could do it, and that there were some of a better Disposition, who did duly distinguish betwixt the *Word* of the false Prophets, and the *true Word* of God, is as little to be doubted. Now this plain Account of *Fact*, doth evidently concur with the foregoing Remark, to oblige all the *Romish*, as well as all the *Reformed*, to join in removing any seeming Difficulty that is now under our Examination.

§. II. Well, shall it then be allowed, that all who profess to be convinced that the Holy Scriptures are the *genuine Word* of God, are obliged to undergo such a Trial of Skill? And to testify thereby,

that their *Conviction* of this Truth, hath a *solid Foundation*? No, by no means. For the Demand is both *Prophane* and *Unreasonable*. *Prophane* and *Petulant*, by presuming to set up the delusory, fictitious *Contrivance*, of any cunning and audacious Brain, to simulate, and counterfeit, or vie with God's *Holy Word*. For tho' it is not done, with design to establish an *Imposture*; yet it is done, with an insidious *Design*, to lay a *Stumbling-block*; and doth tend to render it doubtful, that God hath left any certain *Means* of *Discerning* his own *Divine Revelation*.

And as the Demand is *Prophane*, so it is *Unreasonable*, on many Accounts; both with regard to the *Learned*; and the *Illiterate*.

For, *First*, A Father may know his own Son, and the Son may know his own Father, perfectly well; by the *Face*, and *shape* of the *Body*; by the *Lineaments* of the *Countenance*; the *Voice*; and the outward *Meen*; and all the several *Criteria*, or *Marks*, by which we distinguish one Man from another. And yet neither the Father, nor the Son, be capable to distinguish the *Genuine* from a *Counterfeit*, if only a part of the *Counterfeit Face*, bearing near resemblance, is shewn. Because the *Criteria* do not meet, in such degree and number upon some Parts of the *Face*, separately viewed, as is sufficient for distinguishing with an absolute *Certainty*. And in this Case, it were unreasonable to conclude, that the Father did not know his own Son, nor the Son his own Father; because, forsooth, in that stated Case, they could not *Discriminate* with any *Certainty*.

And, in like manner, There are Texts of the *Holy Scripture*, in great variety, in which, if they are separately considered, the *Criteria* by which it is discerned, that the *Holy Scriptures* are the *Word of God*; do not meet in such degree and number, as is
suffici-

sufficient for distinguishing them from some such Sentences, as may be artfully Counterfeited; so as to Determine, with absolute Certainty, which is the *Genuine Word* of God; which is the *Counterfeit*: And therefore it is unreasonable to demand a Skill of so distinguishing; or to conclude, that one hath not his *Conviction*, that the *Holy Scriptures are the Word of God*, by their own *Intrinsic Criteria* and *Marks*, through the Influence of the *Holy Spirit*, because, forsooth, he doth not pretend to distinguish every separate Sentence of it, from a Sentence that may be artfully counterfeited.

Again, *Secondly*, The Holy Scriptures are mercifully given to be a *Rule of Faith*, and *Life*. And the Means of Conviction that they are the *Word of God*, are abundantly sufficient to answer this great *End*. But surely, this *End* may be fully served, altho' every Man who has the Conviction, that they are truly God's *Word*, by the *Evidence of true Christian Faith*: is not capable to judge, with respect to every particular Text, or Sentence, separately presented. Especially so as to satisfy every idle Curiosity, or captious Cavil; such as this Demand is, conducing nothing to the great *End* mentioned.

And as the foregoing Similitude is calculated for stopping the Mouth of the *Freethinker*, as well as the *Romish Missionary*, and those who build all upon *Tradition*; so let all of them examine and ponder the following Example and Similitude, *viz.*

If any large and copious *Evidence*, all of it written with a Man's own Hand, having his Subscription, and Seal, affixed to it, is laid before him; he will not fail to know assuredly, his own genuine Deed. Yet if only some Sentences of it, that are of lesser Importance, or Necessity, are shown him; together with some different Sentences, in which his Hand-writing is artfully counterfeited, tho' they are not truly

truly in the genuine Charter : He may, in this case, be unable to distinguish the Genuine from the Counterfeit. For as his own Seal and manual Subscription, which are annexed to the Body of the Deed, in gross, are not separately applied to every separate Sentence by itself : So every Sentence of it, is not of equal Importance and Necessity. And it is only from the Concurrence of the Hand-writing, and the necessary, important, and essential Clauses, together with the Subscription and Seal, that the Man can pass his Judgment. And it were unreasonable, to demand more of him ; or to infer, that he did not assuredly know the *Deed* to be his own and genuine ; because, forsooth, he could not so assuredly distinguish some separate Sentence, or Sentences of it, which are of lesser Moment, and of no essential Necessity ; when these only, together with the counterfeited Sentence, or Sentences, are layed before him. And withal, it is plainly obvious, that though he could so distinguish, yet it would conduce nothing to the Great *End* for which the Charter is calculated and designed.

Now, in like manner, it is no less unreasonable, to demand of the Man who truly believes the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*, upon the *Evidence of Faith* ; that he should be able to distinguish every separate Sentence of them, from another Sentence that may be so counterfeited, as to bear a near Resemblance to it.

For *First*, It is plain, that a Skill of so distinguishing every separate Sentence, how far soever it might gratify an idle Curiosity, or answer a captious Cavil ; yet it could conduce nothing more to the Great *End* for which the Holy Scriptures are vouchsafed ; than it would conduce to the *End* and *Design*, for which the supposed Charter in the Similitude is calculated ; that the Granter and Writer
of

of it, could so distinguish every Sentence thereof, from a Sentence artfully counterfeited.

Secondly, All that is contained in the Holy Scripture, is not of *equal Necessity and Importance*: For, besides the Things that are simply *necessary* to Salvation, it hath pleased God (as he hath judged expedient in his infinite Wisdom) to be liberal and plentiful in the Revelation of his Will. The Things that are *absolutely necessary*, to be expressly known, and actually believed, and practised by all; as they are but few, so they are plainly revealed in the Scriptures; insomuch as *he that runs, may read and understand them*.

§. III. Indeed, it is not easy to limit and determine any precise Number of such *Fundamentals*: Because, there is a Latitude with regard to different Persons.

And the Gifts of God, and the Capacities of Men, are various. And all have not equal Opportunities, and Means of Knowledge and Instruction. And therefore to some more, and to others, fewer Things may be *necessary*. Many Things may be *necessary* for the Salvation of a knowing and learned Man, which are not so for an illiterate ignorant. For, *Unto whomsoever God hath given more, of him more shall be required*, &c. Luk. xii. 48. And certainly this is no less true, with regard to *Faith and Belief*, than to *Obedience and Practice*.

Now as to those Things which are of such *indispensible Necessity*, as to exclude every Soul from Salvation, that doth not expressly know, and actually believe, and practise them; God hath not thought fit, any where in his Holy Word, precisely to determine the number of them. And indeed, to have done this, might have tempted the Lazy and Sloathful, to set up with small Degrees of Attainment: Whereas he hath commanded, to encrease and grow,
both

both in Faith and in Knowledge; and in the Degrees and Measure of Obedience. And consequently, to the very same Person, in the several Periods of Life, some Things may become *necessary* to be believed, known, and practised, which were not so before: Accordingly as the Mind is gradually opened and improved, by Instruction, or Study, and Meditation.

Our blessed Saviour hath abridg'd the whole Law of Obedience into two Great Commandments, *The Love of God; and Our Neighbour*. The Author to the Hebrews, xi. 6. reduceth the Law of Belief into two Great Assents. *But without Faith, it is impossible to please God: For he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is; and that he is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.* And the whole Tenor and Series of the Gospel, makes it necessary to seek for Salvation by Jesus Christ. *St. Joh. xiv. 6. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No Man cometh unto the Father, but by me. And Act. iv. 12. Neither is there Salvation in any other: For there is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we can be saved.*

All these, we are sure, are fundamental to all Christians. And if all the Articles also of the Creed of the Apostles, and the Precepts of the Decalogue, together with Repentance of Sin, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, shall be likewise reckoned such; yet their Number is still but few. For the Inferences from all those, here mentioned, tho' clearly drawn; yet they are *indispensibly necessary*, only to such as have a Capacity to deduce them duly; or to discern the Connexion, when they are inferred by others.

The rattling Noise which some of the *Romish* Writers have made, about *Fundamentals*, ridiculously requiring the *Reformed*, to condescend upon, or determine the precise number of them; which the Holy Scriptures have no where precisely determined; doth

occasion what I have briefly here suggested. For otherwise, it was only needful to remark, what all sober Men do agree in, *viz.* That those Things which are of such *indispensible Necessity*, that no Man can be saved without the actual Belief and Practice of them, are certainly both very few, and very plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Is it not then highly unreasonable, to demand of *every* Man who sincerely believes the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, by the Divine Grace of *Faith*, (however simple and illiterate he may be) a nice and accurate Skill of distinguishing every Sentence of Scripture, from another Sentence that may be artfully counterfeited? Although the Parts of Scripture are copiously manifold, and in great variety, of which he may have no Knowledge; and yet without such Knowledge, may in his low Capacity, piously and happily please and serve God, and attain Salvation. Is it not enough in all Conscience, that the simple ignorant Man, is by the Divine Grace and Favour, so far enabled, as to discern in the Holy Scriptures, what is *necessary* for his own Belief and Practice, tho' he cannot perhaps himself so much as read his Bible? And will he not be more acceptable to God, than the Man of Learning, if his *Faith* be greater, and his Obedience more perfect?

I may here likewise add, that the illiterate sincere Man, may be so far from having an exact knowledge of the whole Scriptures, that there are but few Texts of it, familiar to him, even as they are translated into his own Mother Tongue; not to say, in the Original Language, as dictated by the *Holy Ghost*. And yet he may be in a state of Safety and Divine Favour, as he is a Child of God, a true and sincere Member of the Body of Christ. For why may not this be his State, tho' he *has need of Milk, and not*
of

of strong Meat? Heb. v. 12, 13, 14. And although such ought still to be *drinking in the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *Growing in Grace; and in the knowledge of Christ*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Yet surely it must be unreasonable to demand of them, a Skill of distinguishing every Sentence of their Bible, from such Sentence, or Sentences, as may be artfully counterfeited.

Such is the Divine Bounty, that, as the elder Schoolmen, even of the *Romish* Church allow, there is in the Holy Scriptures *satis, superque, i. e.* Not only all that is *necessary*, but plentifully more. For *God giveth liberally unto all Men*, Jam. i. 5. *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*, Isa. xxviii. 10. And who dare be peremptory to determine, how much of the Holy Scripture is *absolutely necessary* to be expressly known, and actually believed and practised by every illiterate Christian, for the attaining of Salvation?

In St. *Joh. xx. ult.* The Evangelist says of that one Gospel, *But these are written that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have Life through his Name.* I know, some both of the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers understand this Text, as including the three other Gospels, as well as that compiled by St. *John* himself: And there is no need I should contradict this; for all these joined together, are not the half of the New Testament. And doth not Church History tell us, that when *Pantanus* the Catechist of *Alexandria*, travelled into the *Indies* for the Conversion of *Infidels*, he found a Church that had been long planted there, and yet had nothing more of the New Testament, but the Gospel of St. *Matthew*? So doth *Eusebius* relate. And who dare affirm, that God had not, even to them, afforded the *absolute Necessaries* for their Salvation? Or that there were

none

none among them, who did believe the Gospel by the Divine *Grace* of *Faith*?

Now although what hath been already said, may seem enough for evincing that the Demand under our present Examination is unreasonable; at least, with regard to the simple and illiterate: Seeing without any Capacity of distinguishing as it doth require, God hath afforded them what is *necessary* for their Salvation, in the due use of the Means they enjoy, by the Ordinary Assistance of his *Grace*, without any need of *Private* and *New Revelation*, or any extraordinary Assistance. And withal, that such a Skill and Dexterity as it doth require, would conduce nothing to the Great *End*, for which the Holy Scriptures are vouchsafed.

§. IV. Yet, I also further add, that it is the *Master* and *Substance*, the *Sense* and *Meaning*, rather than the Letter and Words of Scripture, (whether this be in the Original *Hebrew* and *Greek*, or in any other Language and Translation) that is properly the Object of the Christian's *Faith*: That it is properly the saving Doctrine expressed by the Letter and Words of Scripture. And therefore a simple ignorant Man, may by the Divine *Grace*, understand, believe, and practise, as much of this heavenly Doctrine, as may bring him to Salvation; altho' there are very few Texts of Scripture familiar to him. The Author to the *Hebrews*, writing to his Countrymen, whom he calls *Holy Brethren*, and *Partakers of the Heavenly Calling*, hath these remarkable Words to them. *For when for the time* (viz. the time spent in their Instruction) *ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God; and are such as have need of Milk, and not of strong Meat.*

All that have laboured in the instructing of the Vulgar, cannot fail to be sensible, how difficult it is to teach them the Elements of our Holy Religion, viz. Who hath *Created*, and *Redeemed*, and doth *Sanctify* them. What is *Sin*: And what *Repentance*: And the necessary Terms of the *Covenant of Grace*. To make them learn the *Lords Prayer*, the *Apostles Creed*, and the *Decalogue*. To bring them to understand duly, the true *Love of God*, and of their *Neighbour*: And the Sincerity of Heart, that must accompany the outward Worship and Obedience. And to instruct them in the true Nature and Ends of *Baptism*, and the *Lords Supper*. And when, with the greatest Application of their spiritual Guide, they have attained such Knowledge of these Things, as their Avocations and low Capacity doth allow them to reach unto; How few of them can be advanced to learn our Saviour's Sermon on the *Mount*, and a few select *Psalms*, or some other Portions of Scripture that relate to the chief Things that are to be believed and practised? And yet will any Man presume to affirm, that none of such do sincerely believe the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, by the *Divine Grace* of a truly Christian Faith? Or exclude them from all Capacity of Salvation; because, forsooth, they cannot distinguish betwixt a Sentence of genuine Scripture, and another Sentence that may be artfully counterfeited?

However, at the same time, If the counterfeited Sentence is directly contradictory to those chief Principles of Christian Faith, unto the Knowledge of which, they have, even in their low Capacity, attained; it may be easy for them, so far to distinguish the *spurious* from the *genuine*, as is needful for their own Safety. But if the illiterate Man should have the *Moral Precept*, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*, layed before him in his own Language with

with the one hand, and those Words of our Saviour with the other hand, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*: Seeing the Importance of both those Sentences is so near the same; what great matter is it, tho' he could not distinguish which is the Scripture Text, and which the Precept of Philosophy? The only difference being this, That the Precept of Philosophy is conceived *Negatively*, and the other *Positively*, to carry the Love of our Neighbour to the highest pitch of *Moral Duty*: Both of them being Originally from God, by the Light of Natural Reason, as that is improved by Revelation.

§. V. And as the Demand is unreasonable, with regard to the *Illiterate*, so is it likewise with respect to the *Learned*. The *Learned* indeed, owe Thanks to God, for the Means they have, of discerning any Error that may creep into the sacred Text, by their Skill in the Original Tongues, and the Help of Ancient Copies, their Skill in *Criticism*, as it is assisted even by Prophane Authors, as well as Christian Writers, and by comparing one Part of Scripture with another, and weighing the great Variety of Versions; and, in a Word, by all the Parts of humane Learning in which they are accomplished, as well as by their own assiduous Diligence, and the Success of their Prayers to God, for his special Assistance and Direction.

But after all, altho' more is indeed required of the Learned, than of the Illiterate; yet none did ever imagine, that any of the greatest Learning, had a perfect Knowledge of the Scriptures. There are various Readings of some Texts in the Original, concerning which, it is not *absolutely necessary* for the Learned to distinguish certainly which is the genuine. And even when there is no Variety in the

ancient Copies, Interpreters of great Skill and Accuracy in the Original Tongues, have differed as to the Meaning and Sense; and probably, will always differ. Yet where there is such discrepancy, either it is not in Things of *absolute Necessity*, or the Revelation of them is sufficiently clear and obvious in other plain Texts. And altho' a Learned Man had as great Skill in the whole Bible, as it is reported the *Masorites* had of the *Hebrew Text*; yet such a Proof of Skill, as the Demand under Examination doth require, can never be *necessary*; and it is enough in all Conscience, if the sincere and learned Believer doth know as much of the Holy Scriptures, as is *necessary* for one of his Capacity and Improvement, to the attaining of his own Salvation, and the promoting the Salvation of others that may be under his Care; altho' after his greatest Attainment, he may still say with the *Psalmist*, in *Psal. cxix. 118. Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things out of thy Law.* For even St. Paul himself said, *Now I know but in Part.*

And, as hath been before observed, I may here also add, that it is the *Matter*, the *Sense*, and *Meaning*, the saving Doctrine, conveyed and expressed by the Words of the Holy Scripture, that is properly the Object of the Christian's *Faith*: Whether this be conveyed in the Original *Hebrew* and *Greek*; or any other Translation and Language. And consequently, that as the illiterate may, by the Aids of *Divine Grace*, understand, believe, and practise, as much of this heavenly Doctrine, as may bring them to Salvation, altho' there are very few Texts of the Holy Scripture, in express Words familiar to them.

So, altho' indeed, much more is required of the Learned; yet they may also happily attain Salvation, without the accurate and perfect Knowledge of all the Texts of Scripture, either in the Original,
or

or any one Translation; and at the same time sincerely believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, by the Divine *Grace* of a truly Christian *Faith*. Such Degrees of Knowledge, both of the literal Text, and of the heavenly Doctrine therein conveyed, as are necessary for them, in their higher Capacity and greater Learning, will doubtless be accepted by the Divine Mercy: Yea, their laudable Industry and Attainment, will receive God's Approbation and Reward, though they have not been able to attain such accurate and perfect Skill, as the Demand under Examination doth require. And therefore, even with regard to the most advanced in Learning, that Demand is impertinent and unreasonable.

Mean time, the sincere Christian, being a learned Believer, will soon repudiate any such counterfeit Sentences as do not agree with the Analogy of *Faith*, in the Things of *necessary* Importance: Altho' he doth not pretend to the perfect Knowledge of every separate Sentence of Scripture. And this is all that is *necessary*.

I have already in this *Chapter* shown, that it is as much the Concern of the *Papist*, as of the *Protestant*, to take off any seeming Difficulty arising by the Demand under Examination. And by two plain Similitudes, so calculated, as to be convincing even to the Enemies of revealed Religion, I have shewed, how unreasonable the Demand is. I have represented, that it is in it self prophane, to simulate and counterfeit God's Holy Word, especially as it tends to render it doubtful, that God hath left any certain Means of discerning Divine Revelation. I have by some special Considerations, evinced the unreasonableness of such a Demand, both with regard to the *Learned*, and the *Illiterate* Christian: And that a Capacity of so discerning and distinguishing, as

it requireth, would conduce nothing to the Great *End* for which the Holy Scriptures are vouchsafed,

§. VI. And I need only now to add, that the Demand doth proceed upon a wilful Mistake, or a conceived Misrepresentation of the Doctrine of the *Reformed*: As if they taught, that they derive their Conviction that the Scriptures are of Divine Revelation, in the manner of a *New Revelation*, by the wild and pretended *private Spirit* of the *Enthusiasts*, revealing to them what is, and what is not, God's Word. Whereas, from the plain and rational Account of that *Faith* by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God, as it is distinctly deduced and explained throughout the three foregoing Chapters, it is evident,

First, That to the Attainment of this Conviction, there is no necessity of any *new* and special Revelation: But that in the due Use of the Ordinary Means which God doth afford, the Mind is opened to receive this Conviction by the Divine *Grace*, from those *intrinsic* Evidences that are in the Scriptures themselves, and their *Energy* upon the Heart and Life.

Secondly, From the said foregoing plain Account, it is no less evident, That they who have the Capacity to do it, are supposed, not only to have considered and weighed the *Moral* Evidences, proving that the Holy Scriptures are the *Word* of God; but also, attentively to observe the Evidences thereof that are *intrinsically* in the Scriptures themselves; and to be assiduous and diligent in the reading, hearing, and meditating, upon the Scriptures, with a sincere Desire to know and obey the Will of God; and to be still exerting a conscientious Practice and Obedience of the Divine Will, so far as it is manifested to them;

them ; and withal, by humble and fervent Prayer, to be importunately soliciting God, for such Measure of Light and Direction, as is necessary to the discerning of his Will.

And, *Thirdly*, That it is in the due Use of this Concurrence of those Ordinary Means, that God doth mercifully vouchsafe the Light and Influence of his Holy Spirit, to open the Understanding, and to draw and incline the Will, so as the Mind may discern the Beauty and *intrinsic* Evidences that are in the Scriptures ; and feel by Experience their Power and Efficacy upon their Heart and Life ; and be thereby determined to embrace and cleave to them, as God's Word : And all this, by the Ordinary Assistance of the Divine Grace, without the Necessity of any new, and private Revelation.

I do not affirm, that the Examination of the Moral Proofs is necessary, to such as are weak and illiterate : No ; nor even to observe all, or any great Number of the *intrinsic* Evidences, that are in the Scriptures themselves. For, in the low Capacity of some, it may often be sufficient, by the Mercy of God, that tho' they have only the ordinary Ministry of their spiritual Guides, instructing them in the Things that are necessary for them to know and practise ; and tho' they cannot so much as read the Scriptures themselves ; yet, in their sincere desire to know and obey the Will of God ; even this Desire of their Heart, becomes an acceptable Prayer to God ; and moves him to impart such Measure of his Grace, as doth discover to them, the Beauty, Benefit, Power and Efficacy of God's heavenly Word and Doctrine : Begetting and encreasing in them, the same Divine Grace of Faith, by which the learned and sincere Christian, doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God.

And as the Instruction of their spiritual Guides doth first introduce the *illiterate* to this *Faith*; So the *learned* also are introduced to it, by the *Moral Evidences*: And in the Number of these *Moral Evidences*, we are to reckon *Tradition*, or the Testimony of the Primitive Church, as it is handed down to this present Age, through the several intermediate Ages, by the History of the Church, and the concurring Testimony of Mankind, as well as the present Church.

And these do introduce to the Scriptures, as the Woman of *Samaria* did introduce the People of her City unto *Christ*, the Saviour of the World, *St. Joh. iv.* And as the People said unto the Woman, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed, the Christ, the Saviour of the World.* So that Divine Grace of *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian, whether *learned* or *illiterate*, doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, is wrought, not by the Means introducing to the Scriptures; but by the Holy Scriptures themselves, and the heavenly Doctrine they afford. And this by the *ordinary Assistance* and influence of the *Holy Spirit*; whose Aid is still mercifully ready to the sincere Soul, that duly reads, hears, and meditates upon them. This Divine Aid, is never wanting to those that ask it, as far as is *necessary* to answer the Great End, for which the Holy Scriptures are vouchsafed, *viz.* In all the Things that are *necessary* to every Christian, in their respective different Capacities, without the need of any new, and *special Revelation*.

And now, I cannot forbear to think, I have, in this Chapter, fully answered, the unreasonable Demand of the *Romish* Writers, which I proposed to be therein examined; and by which they endeavour to weaken and oppose the Doctrine of the *Reformed*,

upon

upon the Authority of the Holy Scriptures: Having also, plainly shewn, that it can be of no Service, either to the Enemies of revealed Religion, or to those of the *Reformed*, who have of late pretended, to build all the *Evidence* of the *Faith*, by which Christians do believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God, intirely upon the *Moral* Proof, by *Historical Tradition*. And I now suppose, it will be no hard Task, from what hath been layed down, in this, and the three foregoing Chapters, for any Reader of moderate Capacity, to answer any other Difficulties that can be objected against the Doctrine which I contend for, from any of the Quarters that oppose it, viz. as it hath been explained in the said foregoing Chapters.

And finally, every impartial Reader may perceive, that the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, and his blinded, bewitched, Associates, have no reason to cry out, (as he often doth, throughout his blasphemous Book) that *intrinsical Evidences* of the Divine Revelation of the Holy Scriptures, are wanting: Particularly, pag. 198, 295. Every sincere and devout Christian, pitieth their Ignorance, and joyfully adores the exuberant Goodness of our heavenly Father, who hath plentifully afforded those *intrinsical Evidences* of their Divine Authority, wherewith the Holy Scriptures are stored; having the daily and sensible *Experience* of their powerful *Energy*, upon their Hearts and Lives. This is the impregnable Fort and Sanctuary of the humble and sincere Soul, against all the fiery Darts of the Devil, as well as the Assaults of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*. If *Infidels* are not sensible of this, it is no wonder: For so long as they continue blinded by their Prejudices, haughty in the Thoughts of their own self-sufficiency, indulging their sensual Appetites, and impatient of the Restraints layed on these, by Re-

velation; despising the Influences of the *Divine Grace*; they are as incapable of discerning the *intrinsic Evidences* of Divine Revelation, as *Blind Men are to judge of Colours, or Deaf Men of Sounds*. For those *intrinsic Evidences*, are only to be discerned by those, who, *by reason of use, have their Senses exercised thereby*, Heb. v. ult. By those, who read, and hear, assiduously; and often meditate upon, the Holy Scriptures, with a sincere desire to know the Will of God; and a steady, settled, Purpose and Endeavour, to embrace and cleave to it, by Love and Obedience, as soon as it is discerned; and who, in a deep and humble sense of their own natural Blindness and Infirmary, do by fervent and importunate Prayer, incessantly apply to the *Father of Lights*, and Truth, Holiness and Mercy, for his heavenly Guidance and Direction. And, in a word, by those only, who have made an intire and absolute Surrender of themselves, and all their Powers, and Faculties, to the unerring Conduct of infinite Love and Truth.

To plead, that the *intrinsic Criteria* should be obvious to all, is as unreasonable, as it would be to plead, that all Learning whatsoever should be obvious to all. As every *Science* requires a due and previous Disposition, in order to attain it: So is it with the Evidence of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word* of God. With this difference, that to acquire the *Sciences*, a penetrating Spirit, and acuteness of Understanding, is necessary; and often the Skill of one *Science*, in order to attain another. Whereas, the *Evidence of Faith*, may be attained by the *illiterate*, even of a weak Capacity, as well as by the *learned*, and most ingenious. The previous Disposition it doth require, is Humility of Mind, in a deep sense of Self-insufficiency, and a sincere desire

to know the Will of God, with a firm purpose to embrace and obey it. The Labour requisite, is not the Study of intricate Speculation, and knotty Difficulties, but in the Disposition mentioned, to read, and hear, and meditate upon the Scriptures, with the Importunity of fervent Prayer, for Divine Light. In this Way, the *intrinsic* Evidences, will display themselves to those of the meanest Capacity; while *they are hid from the wise and prudent*, Matt. ii. 25. in the height of their Pride and Penetration.

§. VII. I design'd here to have ended this *Treatise*: But from several Hands, Two Objections have been offered, against the Rational Account I have given of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth Believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, *viz.*

First, That if this *Conviction of Faith* is drawn from the *Intrinsic Evidences* which the Scriptures themselves do afford, as they are displayed to the Humane Mind, by the Light and Aid of the Divine Grace; and withal, if the Conviction afforded by those Evidences, is nothing less than that which is the effect of scientific Proof and Demonstration: Then, where is the *Virtue, Merit, and Reward of Faith*? For as much as the Mind that doth, in this manner, receive the Conviction, is as strongly carried into the *Assent*, as if the Proof were drawn from Principles of Self-evidence in the scientific way. This is the Objection in its greatest Force. And tho' I think any Ingenious Reader may easily solve it, from what is represented in the foregoing Chapters; yet I shall here briefly give the Answer I think proper. And this, *1st*, with regard to the attaining this *Conviction of Faith*; and next, with regard to its *Encrease, Continuance and Perseverance*

2^d, With regard to the attaining this *Conviction*
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of Faith. Is it not plainly evident, from all that hath been represented, that this is only to be attained by the humble Mind, that hath surrendered itself to the Divine Conduct, with a sincere desire to know the Will of God; and that is willing and resolved to embrace and cleave to it, as soon as it is known; and to submit itself by due Obedience? And withal, that this *Conviction* is not to be attained, without assiduous, importunate, and fervent Prayer, in the diligent Reading, Hearing and Meditating upon the Holy Scriptures? Now, it is this due Conduct and Disposition of Mind, under the influence of Divine Grace (which is still mercifully ready to cherish and assist such due Disposition and Conduct) that doth constitute the *virtue* of Faith, and entitles to its *Praise* and *Reward*: For when the intrinsecal Evidences are displayed to the Mind, the *virtue* of Faith doth not consist in the *Assent*, any farther than as it is given with a willing Mind. And it is this *due Conduct* and *Disposition of Mind*, that prepares the Soul to attain this Faith and *Conviction*, and gives it the virtue, as well as procures to it the Divine Acceptance and *Reward*. And then,

In the next place, With regard to its *Encrease*, *Continuance*, and *Perseverance*: It might serve for Answer, to refer to the celebrated Sentence of the Poet Caro: *Non minor est virtus, quam quærere, parva tneri.* There is no less Virtue in keeping and maintaining the valuable Purchase, than in the first acquiring. But, to be more particular, and that no shadow of Difficulty may remain,

Let it be considered, 1st, That in our present state of Probation, Christianity admits of no permanent and fixed Point, or degree of Attainment, to be rested in: But we are still to be growing in Grace, and advancing to higher degrees of Perfection. Yea, the state of a Christian is as one swimming against the

the Stream; as in a current of Corruption; the Labour is hard and incessant: Every Stroke that is lost, or neglected, carries back in the progress already made. And this assiduous and strenuous Labour, for the *increase and perseverance of Faith*, in *pressing forward toward the Mark, for the Prize of our high Calling*; doth still *increase the Virtue, the Praise, and the Reward*. Again,

- 2dly. Let it be considered, That our Christian State of Warfare is continual and incessant: Our Spiritual Enemies are many, strong, vigilant, active, restless, and of long Experience; well acquainted with our Weaknesses; and tho' the Divine Aid is liberal, yet the Danger is great, and the Assaults without intermission: Tho' the merciful God *doth not quench the smoking Flax*, is tender of exposing the *weak in Faith*; and limiteth the hardest Trials to be only undergone by those that are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his Might*; (as an *Abraham* or a *Job*) and hath graciously promised, that *he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but in every Temptation will give us a way of escape*: Yet still the Christian hath in this World but a wrestling fighting Life: And even with the benefit of the *whole Armour of God*, the Conflict is hard, in *persevering to the End*, to obtain the Victory and the Crown. Nay, Christians that are far advanced, are often foil'd, and sometimes losing Ground; having their Faith continually assaulted and battered, by *the fiery Darts of the Devil*, under the disadvantage of a corrupted Nature, and vitious Habits. And so, in the constant Combat and Exercise of Faith, and other Christian Graces that attend it, is there not still place left, for the *Virtue, the Praise, and the Reward*? I think all this may well suffice, (if there is not too much said) for solving the proposed Objection.

§. VIII. There is one other Objection, also lately offered to me: And tho' I think the small Difficulty it carries, may easily be removed, even from what is before represented; yet I shall here also propose and answer it.

The Objection is, That the Account I have given of the *Faith* by which the sincere Christian doth Believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, cannot be called a *Rational Account*, and far less *highly Rational*; (as I have affirmed it is) because it cannot give Conviction to every rational Mind; but only to those Minds that are enlightened by the Divine Grace.

I answer, That there are many philosophical Truths of a demonstrative Evidence, even by the mere Light of natural Reason; Yea, several Propositions which *Euclid* hath demonstrated: But withal, they are such Truths, as the Evidence of them, is above the Capacity, not only of the illiterate; but likewise of many that have been liberally educated, but have not a Genius adapted to the *Geometry*, or to the *Metaphysics*; yet this does not hinder the Evidence of them to be *rational*, yea, *highly rational*, in itself; and to those Minds that are capable to perceive it. And why then may not the *intrinsic Criteria*, likewise, which the Holy Scriptures contain, afford the Evidence that they are the Word of God: An Evidence that is highly rational in itself, and to those Minds that are adapted to perceive it; tho' it is not obvious to all, or to the greater Part of Mankind; but only to those who are of a due Disposition for perceiving it?

Yea, there is a further Observation, which gives a huge Advantage to the Side I contend for, *viz.* That many demonstrable Truths in the *Mathematics*, and others in the *Metaphysics*, are of such In-

tricacy, that a long and laborious Instruction, is not able to render the Minds of the greatest Part of Mankind, capable to perceive their Evidence : Whereas, on the other hand, the most simple and illiterate, in the careful and sincere use of the few plain Rules, prescribed in the Holy Scriptures themselves, cannot fail to perceive the Evidence which they do themselves afford, that they are God's Word. And all of common Sense are capable of this, even in the present Weakness of the humane Mind.

If the rational Mind were in its primitive State of Integrity, doubtless all Truths proposed to it, with their respective and proper Evidence, would be equally perceived ; and this Truth among the rest, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*. But as it is with many Truths demonstrable in *Philosophy*, and *Geometry*, in our present State of Infirmary ; their Evidence cannot be perceived by all, from the want of a due Capacity, and a proper Genius : So, the want of a due Disposition, and from a moral as well as natural Incapacity, the Evidence of this Truth, *That the Scriptures are the Word of God*, cannot be perceived by all : With this difference, That the Multitude of Mankind are absolutely incapable of receiving the Evidence of many Scientific Truths ; and this without their own Fault : But every Soul is only hindred from perceiving the *Evidence of Faith*, through their own Fault. The Divine Grace is always ready to enlighten the weak Understanding, and to influence the corrupted Will, for disposing and preparing the Mind, that it may be capable of receiving the *Evidence of Faith* : And that all do not receive it, is only owing to the wilful and perverse Wickedness of Men. Instead of following the plain and proper Rules necessary in order to receive it, they wilfully reject them ; they *hate the Light*, and shut their Eyes ; *they delight in Darkness*.

rather than Light; they are obstinately averse to the Terms of Salvation which the Gospel hath manifested, and doth require. And so long as they continue in this perverse Obstinacy, there is no Remedy; they must continue (only through their own Fault) in their Incapacity of perceiving the Evidence, tho' at the same time, it is in it self, a *rational Evidence*, and *highly rational*, to all who are of the *due Disposition* to receive it.

In our present state of Infirmary, such is the weakness of the Bodily Eye, that it cannot discern the small Animals that are in Putrefaction, (as in rotten Cheese, &c.); and one who doth not credit this, and only trieth the truth of it by the Inspection of his unassisted Eyes, he may laugh at the Confidence of one asserting it. But when by the help of a Microscope, he plainly discerns the Truth, and clearly sees the Animals in their Shapes, and moving, he is undeceived and convinced, and becomes sensible that it was his own Ignorance that made him deny, and laugh at his Informer. If they who do not perceive the *Evidence of Faith*, would consider the present weakness of the Humane Understanding, and the present corrupted state of the Humane Will, by which it is averse to Divine Truths, that tend to bridle and mortify our corrupt Affections and vitious Habits; while they hear Men of Wisdom and Probity affirming, that the *Intrinsical Criteria*, by the Aid and Influence of the Divine Grace, do, in the Holy Scriptures, afford a clear and convincing *Evidence* to the Rational Mind, that they are truly the Word of God, they could not in common Modesty pretend to laugh them to scorn. If the Man who cannot discern the Animals in Putrefaction, would obstinately refuse the easy help of the Microscope, he must continue in his Ignorance, and thereby exposeth himself to Laughter. The Rules for attaining the Conviction
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of Faith, are few, plain, and simple. Upon the due use of them, the comfortable Satisfaction, in the discovered Evidence, creates and settles in the Soul, a fulness of Delight, *a Stranger intermedleth not with their Joy*. But if the use of the Means is obstinately rejected, the Ignorance can neither have Remedy, nor Excuse.

§. IX. And now, after all that hath been treated, for establishing and vindicating the *Rational Account* of the *Evidence* of this *Faith*, if it shall be said, What is the Use, or Need, of all this Labour? Seeing it is such an Evidence, as cannot, by all the Arts of humane Reasoning, be convincing to any humane Mind, but of those only, who in the due use of the Rules prescribed, have by the aid of the Divine Grace, attained the *Disposition* of Mind, that is necessary to render capable of receiving the *Conviction*?

I answer, That both the Need and Use of it is manifest, in many respects that are of high Importance; of which I shall name some of the more eminent.

As, *First*, Because without such *Rational Account*, it is not possible to find any farther degree of a *solid Bottom* and *Foundation* of the *Christian Faith*, upon which the humane Mind may rest, than merely the *moral Evidence*, established chiefly upon humane Testimony and Tradition; which therefore can only arise to a *Humane*, but never to a *Divine Faith*: Because a *Divine Faith* can only be built upon the *Divine Testimony*. This hath been so fully evinced and illustrated in the foregoing Chapters, that it is needless to say more upon it.

2dly, Without such *Rational Account*, it is not possible to stand in Defence of the Reformed Religion, against the Romish Church, upon the fundamental Article of Christianity, *the Divine Authority of*

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the Holy Scriptures. This is also so manifest to every intelligent Reader of the foregoing Chapters, that it were superfluous to add more here.

Again, 3^{dly}, The Use and Need of this *Rational Account*, is also farther manifest, with respect to the *Sincere Christian*: And this, 1st, By the comfortable Satisfaction that ariseth in the Mind, from its perceiving the concordant Harmony of Reason and their Holy Religion. And, 2^{dly}, As they are thereby assisted to answer the cavilling Amusements, both of *Papists* on the one hand, and *Deists* on the other. And that they may (according to the Rule of the Apostle, 1 *Per.* iii. 15.) *be ready always to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh them a Reason of the Hope that is in them.*

And then, 4^{thly}, It is no less needful, and may be of great Use, to awaken and excite, even the *Deists* themselves, to a more impartial Enquiry; when they find nothing is endeavoured to be obtruded upon them, but what may be accounted for, upon such Principles, as are no ways contradictory to the *common Reason* of Mankind: Nothing relating to God, but what is highly becoming his infinite Wisdom and Goodness: Nothing demanded of Man, but what may well be considered, both as his Interest and his Duty.

No sober *Deist* can want the Conviction of the present Weakness and Depravity of the human Mind, of his own Mind at least; and that the Divine Interposál, for the Remedy of this, is possible: And how is it possible for the Rational Mind, in this case, not to wish such Divine Interposál? And when such pretended Divine Interposál is importunately offered to the *Deist's* Examination, as at the first View, seems plainly calculated to answer the Ends of such wished Remedy, how is it possible for the Rational Mind to avoid a Conviction of the Obligation

gation, to examine and ponder the Vouchers it brings? Now, even the *Moral Evidence* that is offered for establishing the *Conviction* of the Divine Interposál, by that Revelation for which we plead, is at least, greater than any Evidence which the Learned in the natural Philosophy, can have of many Truths of great Use and Importance to Mankind, before the Experiments are made, by which those useful Truths are established. And if it is laudable in those Learned, because of the great Profit which Mankind do thereby reap, to be still proceeding in their Experiments, under the benefit of such slender antecedent Evidence: Ought not a greater *moral Evidence*, in a matter of far greater Importance, because relating to their eternal Interest, in common Reason, to awaken and excite Men, to make the experimental Trial, if the *Conviction* of Faith may be attained from the *intrinsic Criteria*, through the Aid of the Divine Grace, *that the Holy Scripture is God's Word?* The Rules of proceeding in this Experiment are plain: (as in Pages 25, 26.) And if the last, the highest and most plenary *Conviction* from the *Evidence of Faith*, is only to be attained by such Experiment: Yet, why should this discourage from the Endeavour, any more than the ingenious are discouraged from their Experiments in the natural Philosophy? Seeing all the useful Truths they are endeavouring to discover, are likewise such, as no *Conviction* or Proof of them, can be attained otherways, than by Experiments. And here indeed, would be a copious Field, for persuading and inviting to the Trial, if I had the proper Talent of decláming. Men of Wisdom and Probity, have experimentally attained the comfortable *Evidence*, in the way prescribed; and are daily crying, *O taste and see!* And do affirm, that the Experiment duly
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proceeded in, can never fail: And that God is always ready on his part, if Men are not wanting on theirs. They who mock at this, and dissuade from it, have never made the Trial. No: They will not undergo the strictness of Virtue and Self-denial, which this requires; pretending the *Sufficiency*, the *perfect Sufficiency*, of the *Light of common Reason*: And that therefore they have neither Use for, nor need of, further Divine Interposal by *Revelation*; or to regard any pretended *Evidence* relating to it. This Vain Pretence hath been fully examined and confuted, in *Part I.* And therefore here, I shall only wish, that all sober *Deists*, and unsincere, tho' professed Christians, would consider, and duly weigh the Words of *Rev. iii. 17, 18.* He that hath an Ear, let him hear, what the Spirit saith to the Church of *Laodicea.* *Because thou saist, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me, ——— and anoint thine eyes with Eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*

And now, from the *rational Account* which I have briefly given, of that *Faith*, by which the sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the *Word of God*; especially, as the same is further illustrated and explained, in the Answers given to the proposed Objections; I humbly conceive, that any Reader of common Capacity, and a Mediocrity of Improvement, may be able to solve any Objections whatsoever, that may be further urged, against the Doctrine and Principles which I have layed down, and endeavoured to explain and establish, in this *Part II.* wishing this had been performed by some hand of better Capacity: And that it may please God to accept of, and so to bless my weak Labour, in both Parts of
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my *Treatise*, as it may conduce, in some degree, to guard and rescue from the spreading Contagion of *Infidelity*: And that every Christian Reader, may be thereby further confirmed, *edified, and built up, in our most holy Faith*, to the Glory of God, through *Jesus Christ*, the Saviour of Mankind. *Amen.*



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CONTENTS OF PART II.

CHAP. I.

That the Divine Grace of Faith, by which the Sincere Christian doth believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, doth truly afford a more convincing Evidence of that great Truth, than can be attained by any Moral Proof whatsoever. §. 1, 2, 3, 4. This Divine Grace of Faith affording that more convincing Evidence, rationally accounted for. Page 12. §. 5, 6, 7.

CHAP. II.

That this Subject hath not been treated of, by the Reformed Divines with that Clearness that is requisite. P. 17. §. 1. Of the Energy by which the Holy Scriptures do operate upon the Heart and Life. The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, with respect to this. P. 23. §. 2, What is incumbent on those who are perswaded that the Scriptures are God's Word, upon the Moral Evidence, in order to their attaining the Conviction of Faith. P. 25. §. 3.

CHAP. III.

The State of the Controversy betwixt the Romish and the Reformed, upon the Subject of the Evidence of that Faith, by which we believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God. P. 31. §. 4. Objections against our Explanation of the Reformed Doctrine proposed, and answered. P. 32, &c.

CHAP. IV.

The captious Amusement urged by Papists, Deists and others, viz. That the Christian Believer is not able to distinguish the Genuine from the Counterfeit, when some Sentences of each are laid before him. This captious Difficulty examined. P. 58, &c. A few more Objections proposed, and answered. P. 89. Of the Use and Need of that Rational Account of the Evidence of Faith which we have given. P. 95.

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